

Biennial BCLA Climate Benchmark: 2022-2023 Report

Climate Action Committee Benchmarking Working Group

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For the British Columbia Library Association



Climate Action Committee

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Introduction

We value what we measure but don't always measure what we value. With the introduction of British Columbia Library Association's (BCLA) climate position statement, *BCLA Climate Action Statement: Essential Climate Justice Responsibilities in the Library Sector (2024)*, BCLA's Climate Action Committee resolved to establish a baseline against which BC libraries' progress towards the goals outlined within could be measured. The culmination of two years' worth of volunteer work, the 2024 BC Libraries Climate Benchmarking Survey was the first of its kind in our province.

This report shares our initial findings, and offers an analysis structured around the ten Calls to Action from the Climate Action Statement. It concludes by summarizing potential next steps for climate action across the library sector. The appendix outlines the process used to create the survey.

Setting a baseline

Unless otherwise indicated, respondents are reporting about the 2022 and 2023 calendar years. As this is the first survey, these results are intended as a broad baseline representation of climate action within BC's libraries. Future surveys will offer a benchmarking comparison to this baseline.

Respondent demographics

Over 107 library representatives responded to the survey. It may be noted that the total responses for some of the questions does not tally up to 107. Due to the wide array of communities and contexts in the province, it was left to the discretion of individual respondents to decide if a given question was relevant to their organization, therefore 100% completion of the survey was optional.

The majority of respondents, a full two-thirds, were from public libraries. A quarter of responses were from academic libraries. Just 7% were from school libraries, and one library consortium responded as well.

The geographic range of responses was impressive. Libraries from all across the province responded, including urban and remote communities. The vast majority, 80%, responded on behalf of their individual library location, together providing a geographically distributed ground-level snapshot of climate change in the provincial library sector. The remainder responded on behalf of their overall system, representing a broader, organization-wide perspective. Respondents held a wide variety of positions, from library clerk to CEO, with the majority representing directors, managers, and librarians. The vast majority said we could contact them for clarification, suggesting broad transparency and desire to connect around climate and libraries.

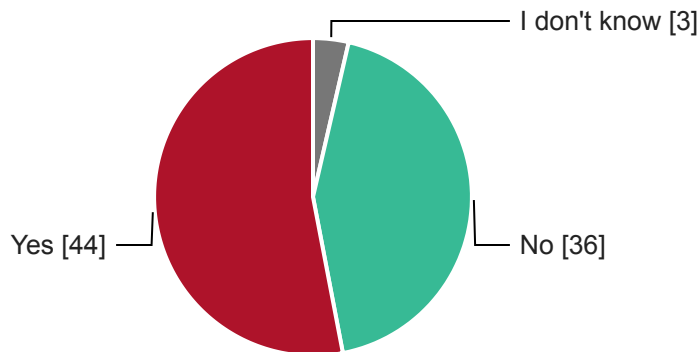
2022-2023 data review and analysis

In this section we share our initial findings and offer an analysis structured around the *BCLA Climate Action Statement: Essential Climate Justice Responsibilities in the Library Sector (2024)*. Following the initial section on climate impacts, each numbered heading is one of the ten Calls to Action from the Statement.

0.0 Climate impacts on libraries

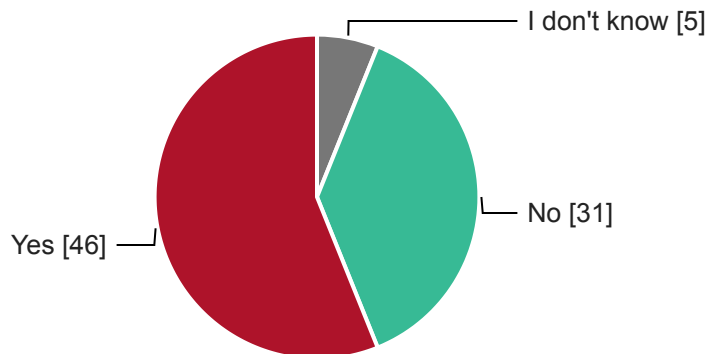
0.1 Has your organization been significantly affected by direct climate impacts?

e.g. extreme temperature or precipitation event, flood, wildfire, extended smoke hours, drought, changes in precipitation patterns, snowpack, deglaciation, sea level rise or degradation, etc.



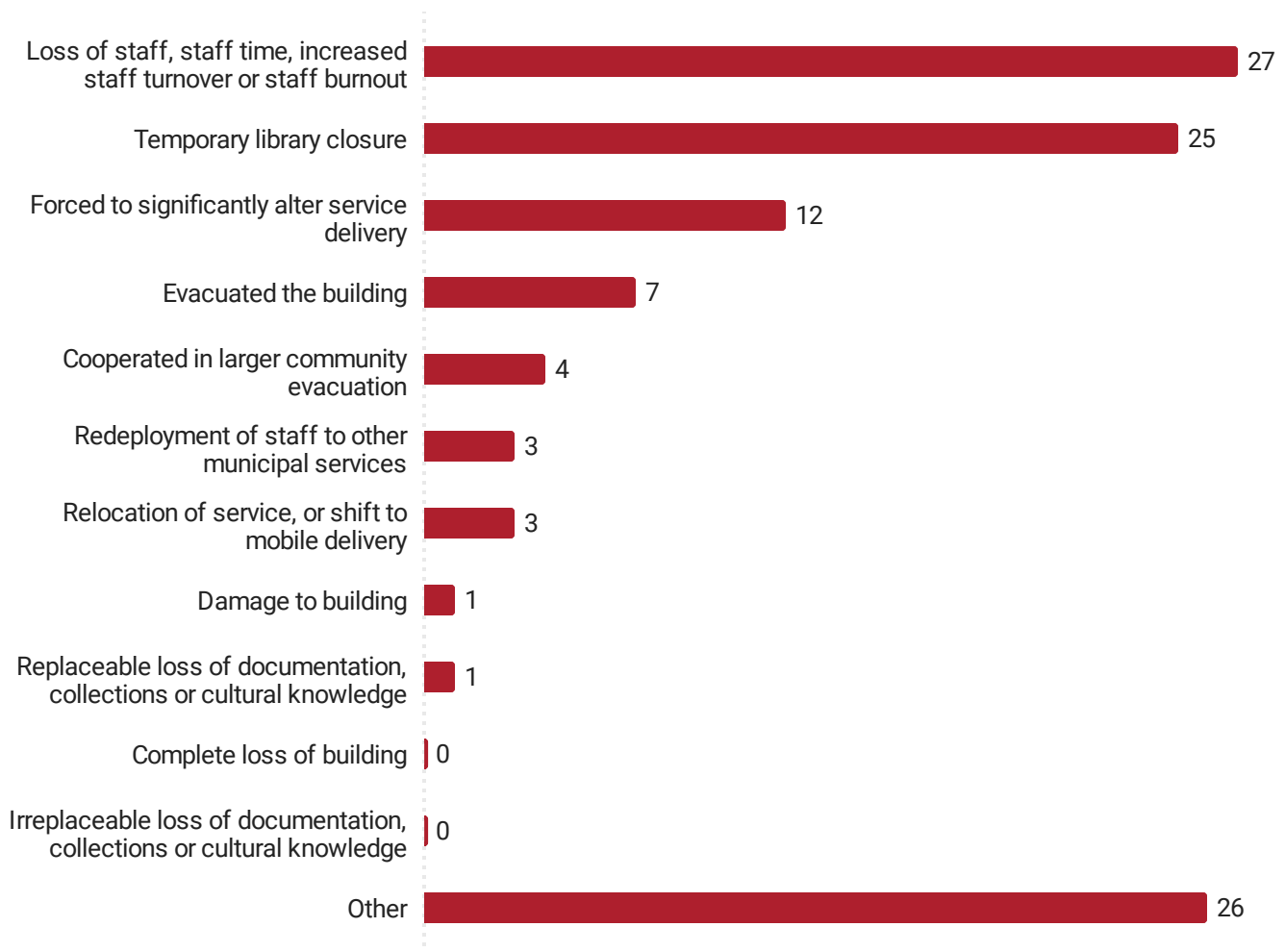
0.2 Has your organization been significantly affected by indirect climate impacts?

e.g. water shortages, infrastructure failure, supply chain disruption, invasive species, food insecurity, climate-related physical and mental health impacts, novel vector-borne diseases, loss of housing, economic effects, loss of culture or tradition, etc.



- Our initial results, which will serve as baseline data for future benchmarking, show that 41% of respondents from the province’s libraries perceive that they have already experienced a direct climate impact on their organization and 43% have experienced an indirect impact that has affected their organization. These impacts, which ranged from heat waves to atmospheric rivers and their attendant ripple effects upon built infrastructure, resulted in a variety of consequences with a wide range of severity.

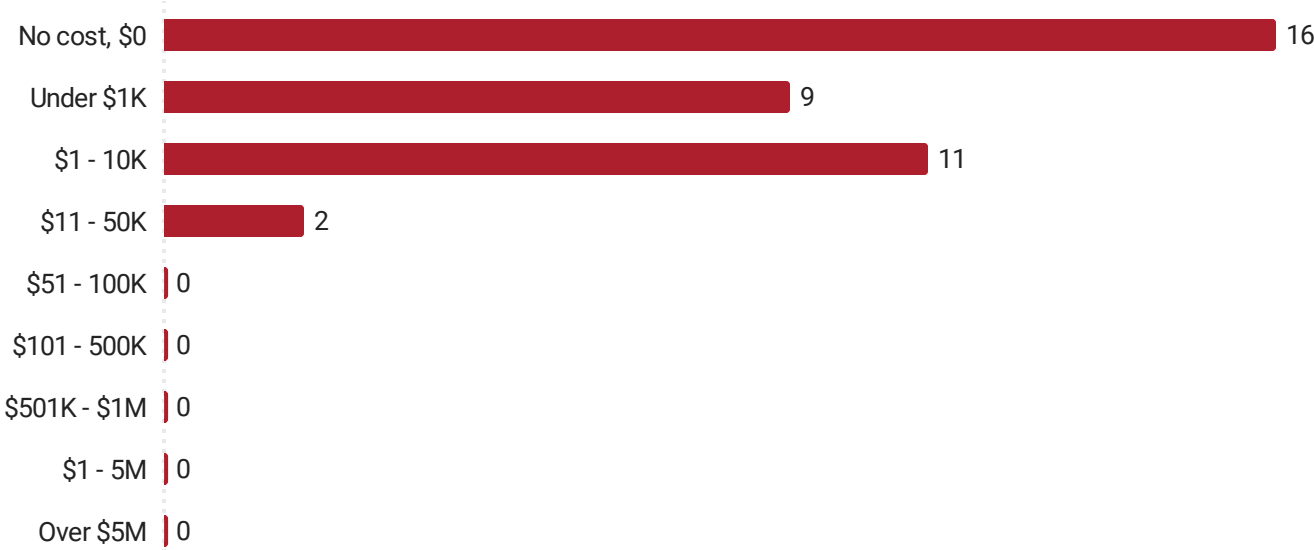
0.3 If your organization has experienced direct or indirect impacts from climate change, how has your organization been impacted?



- At this time, relatively minor disruptions to service have been the most common, such as “loss of staff, staff time, increased staff turnover or staff burnout” or a common write-in response, “maintaining building temperatures”. The majority of associated costs reported were in the \$0 to 50,000 range.

0.4 If your organization has experienced direct or indirect impacts from climate change, what were the estimated total costs* of these impacts over the past two years?

*total costs including those paid by insurance coverage



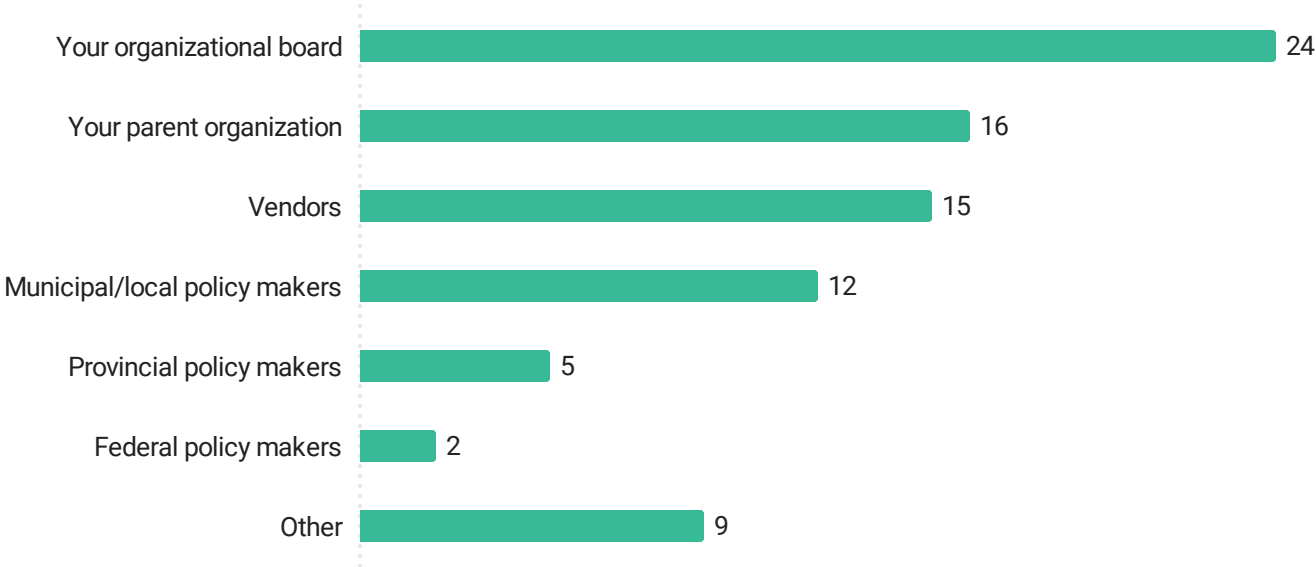
- However, at the time of the survey, nearly half of respondents didn't know how much climate impacts were costing their organization. Some costs are likely obscured within operations (e.g. staff mental health impacts), some may not yet have an account associated with them (e.g. additional electricity costs for air conditioning or heating during extreme weather), and some costs may not be recognized as being associated with climate change (e.g. chemical treatments for invasive insects). In addition, even small costs can pose significant problems for smaller and more remote libraries which are often critical community hubs due to the lack of local public infrastructure. For these reasons, finding ways to quantify the added climate-driven stressors upon provincial library organizations is an area for discussion and growth. This information may prove especially valuable in municipal discussions around budget and facility improvements where libraries have been designated as public cooling, warming, and clean air centers.
- More severe impacts and costs also occurred during the period surveyed, including supply chain and service disruptions, temporary library closures, loss of replaceable documentation/collections/cultural knowledge, local evacuations, and loss of staff housing. At least one library branch was lost in 2023, though it was not captured in the survey. The interrelated pressures on staff and community members' mental health were also a frequent concern.

Without immediate and significant societal mobilization akin to WWII or COVID-19, as global CO2 emissions continue to rise, we expect more respondents and organizations will report being impacted in the coming years, and the effects will manifest in more severe and costly forms. Please consider documenting increasing costs and responsibilities associated with climate change in your organization, as it will add detail to our understanding of how our sector is being affected over time. We will track and report the trajectory of this measure over future surveys.

1.0 Advocate for climate action at the scale that is necessary

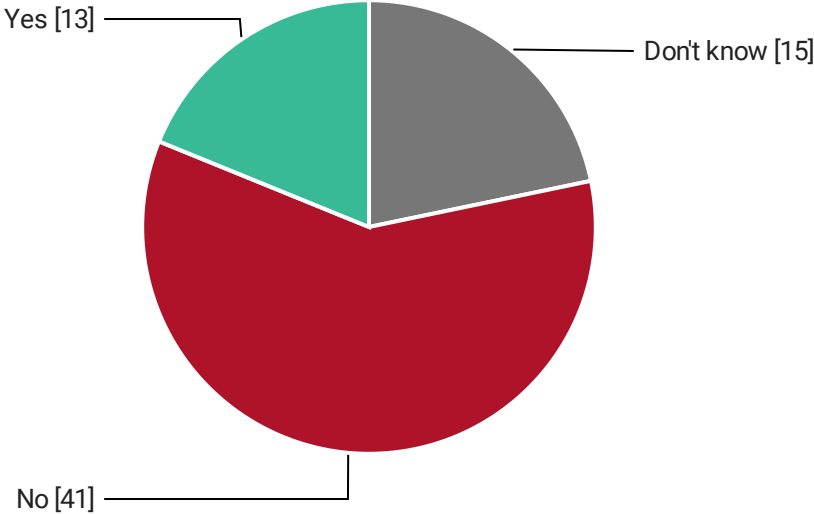
Advocate for greater action from governments and policy makers. Bring the perspectives of libraries to these conversations and decisions, including library involvement in building community resilience, education, and emergency support for climate change impacts and disasters.

1.1 Has your organization engaged in advocacy for increased climate action with any of the following?

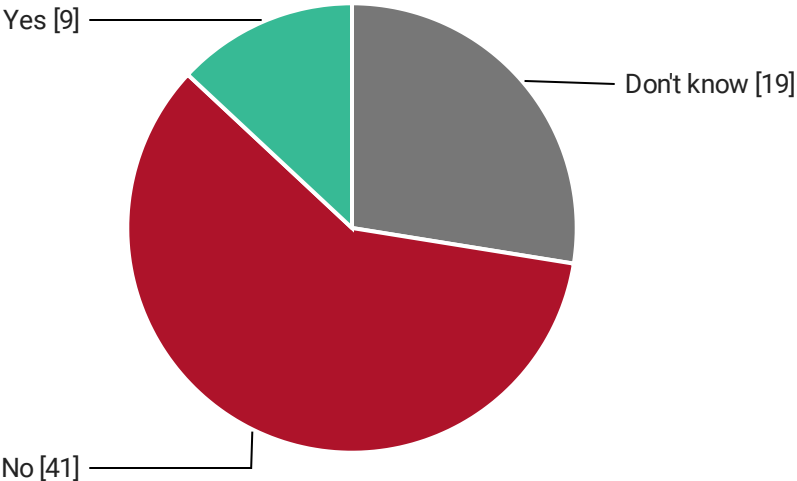


- A large number (38%) of respondents reported that their organization had advocated for increased climate action, most commonly to their organizational board. Very few are engaging at the Provincial or Federal levels, which is understandable given the vast majority of respondents represented institutions at the local level. That being said, vendors, parent organizations, and municipal policy makers represent an underleveraged strategic area of opportunity for advocacy.

1.2 Does your organization's current strategy documents, policies or procedures include documentation of past experience supporting community resilience, post-disaster information needs, and emergency support during or after climate impacts and other natural disasters?



1.3 Does your organization's current strategy documents, policies or procedures include a promotional strategy for sharing your organization's past experience supporting community resilience, education, and emergency support during climate change impacts and disasters? e.g. to your board; to parent organizations, at the municipal level, at the provincial level, to the public



- As the prior section alludes to, Advocacy may be made more difficult by a lack of supporting documentation. Despite the fact libraries are increasingly positioned as climate adaptation infrastructure (public cooling, warming, and clean air centers), the majority of respondents reported no documentation of “experience supporting community resilience, post-disaster information needs, nor emergency support during or after climate impacts and other natural disasters”, nor a promotional strategy for sharing these experiences in their organization’s strategy documents, policies, or procedures.

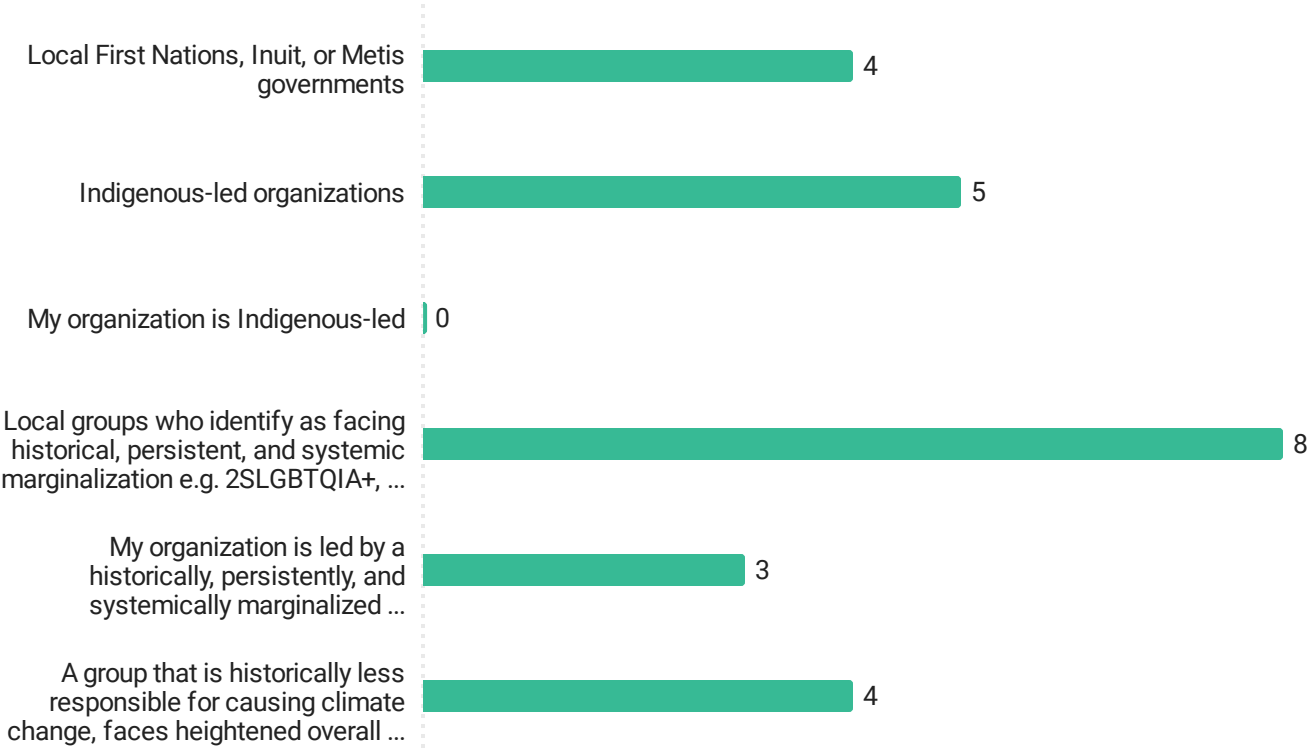
While advocacy can sometimes feel like an awkward fit with traditional library values such as neutrality or an impulse to just get things done, the stereotype of libraries and library workers as quiet may not be serving us well in this case. Libraries are increasingly expected to do “more with less”, yet as one of the last public spaces, we are well-positioned to witness public needs and assess whether our services are adequately resourced to address those needs. Thinking beyond our library boards while also working closely with them to speak truth to parent organizations and policy makers is a key area of development. Organizing around leveraging our collective purchasing power to apply pressure to vendors or share information about more sustainable choices may also prove fruitful.

2.0 Support just and inclusive solutions based in social justice

Develop, enable, initiate, support, and prioritize efforts informed by Indigenous rights and sovereignty, and initiatives led by People of Colour, Indigenous communities, and Historically, Persistently, and Systemically Marginalized peoples. Support and contribute to just and inclusive climate solutions that work towards dismantling barriers and inequalities.

- Working towards climate justice was uneven within the provincial library sector.
- A few big successes in external collaboration were notable. Nine respondents reported their organization worked with “Local First Nations, Inuit, or Metis governments” or “Indigenous-led organizations” on climate-related initiatives, and four respondents had similar collaborations around “climate-related emergency response plans”.
- Other libraries collaborated on climate initiatives with local groups “who identify as facing historical, persistent, and systemic marginalization” or are “historically less responsible for causing climate change, [face] heightened overall risk from climate impacts, or both”, such as seniors, students, and youth.

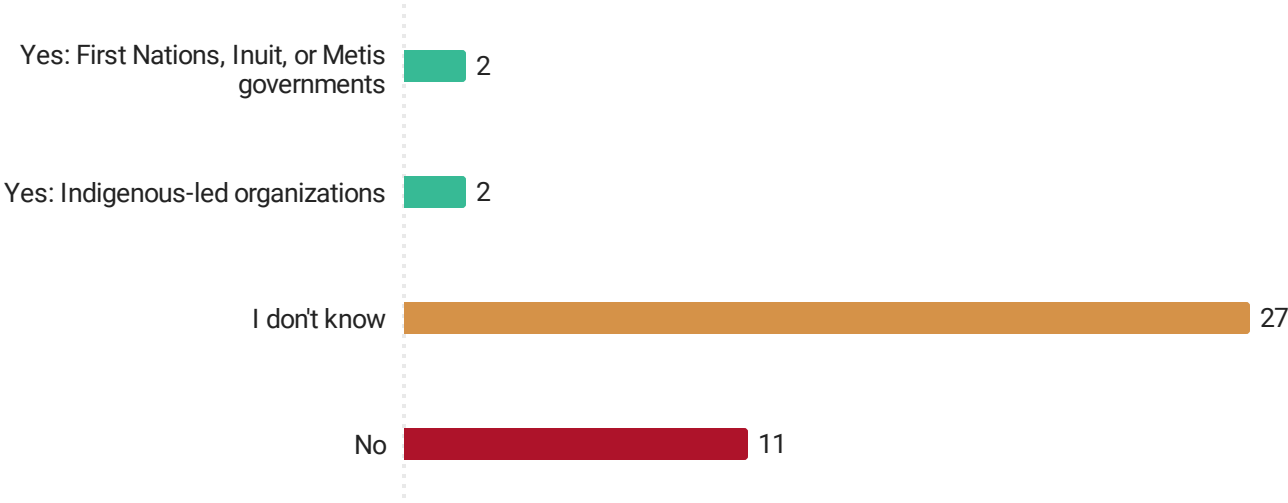
2.1 Has your organization collaborated on climate-related initiatives with:



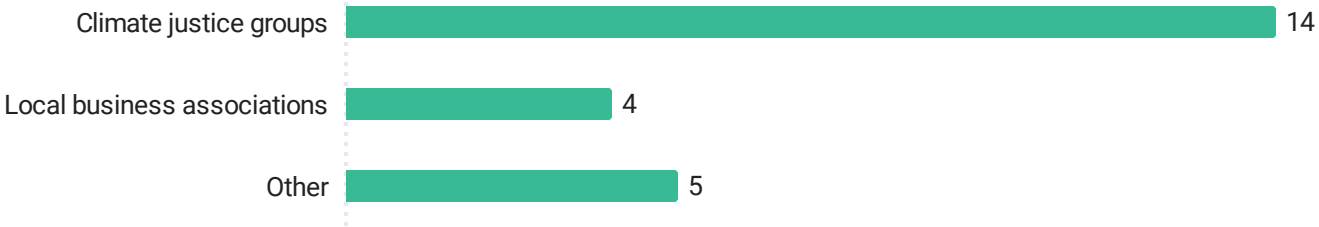
2.2 Has your organization worked with First Nations, Inuit, or Métis governments and/or

Indigenous-led organizations to collaborate on climate-related emergency response plans?

e.g. public dialogues, climate education campaigns, sharing economy infrastructure, adaptation or emergency planning, etc.

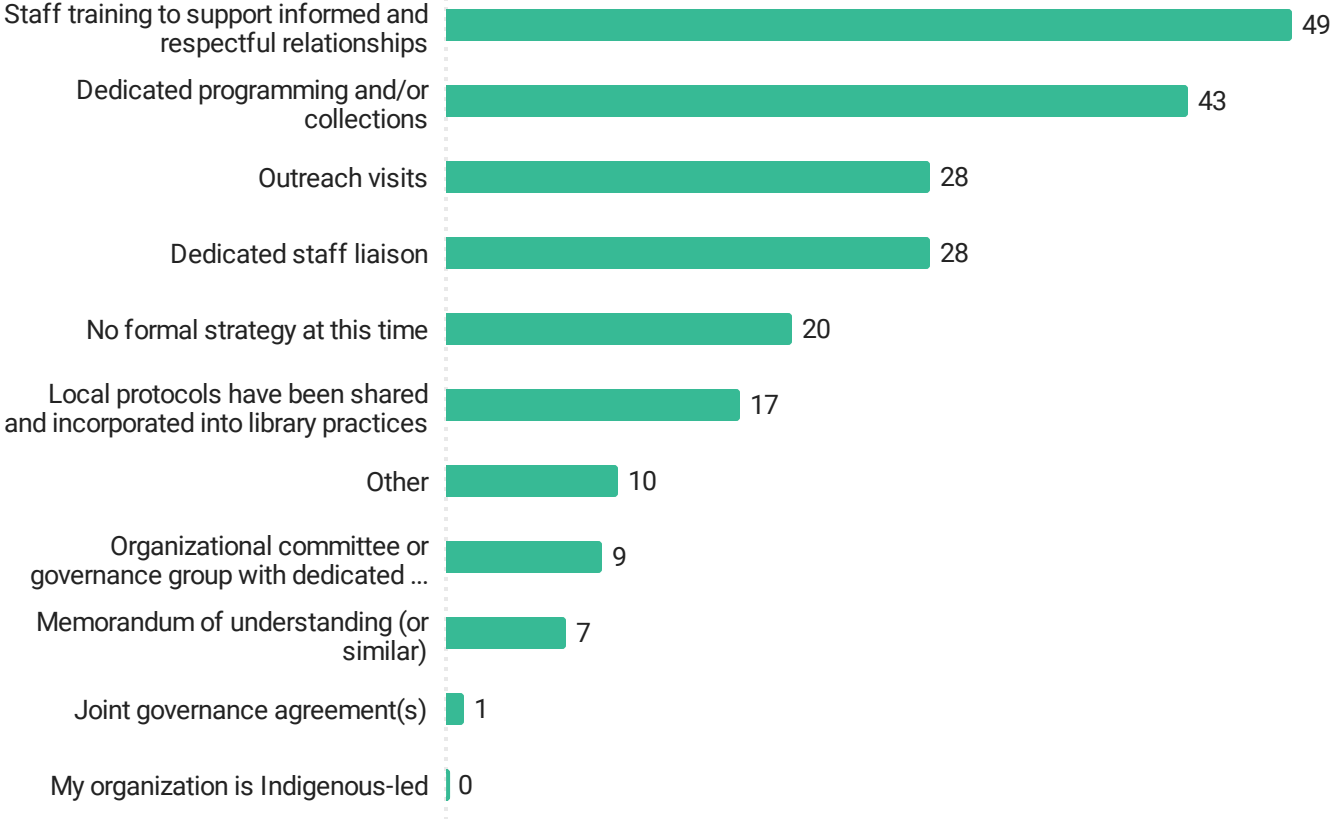


2.3 Has your organization collaborated on climate initiatives with other local community organizations?



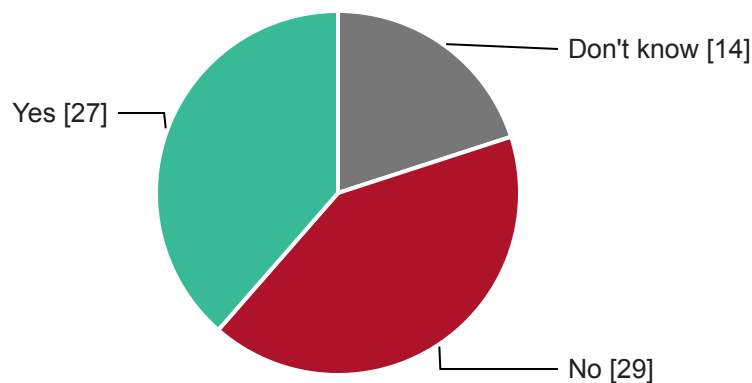
- 13% of respondents worked with a local climate justice group in their community and a few local climate connections were also made with other local environmental groups and farmer’s markets.

2.4 How are your relationships with Indigenous host nations, other resident Indigenous people, and Indigenous-led organizations developed and maintained?



- Internally, many respondents said their libraries provided dedicated staff training, programs, or collections to develop and maintain relationships with Indigenous host nations, peoples, and organizations. Over a quarter of respondents also conduct outreach visits to Indigenous host nations, or have a staff liaison to maintain such relationships. One respondent noted their organization reserved two trustee positions for Indigenous representation.
- However, 19% indicated they have no such formal strategy at this time.
- Furthermore, less than a fifth of respondents reported that their organizations had collaborated on climate-related initiatives with any marginalized peoples. Very few have worked on climate-related emergency response plans with First Nations, Inuit or Metis governments or Indigenous-led organizations.

2.5 Does your organization’s current strategic documents, policies or procedures include knowledge of the socially vulnerable demographics to climate impacts within the community you serve?



- This lack of collaboration may be compounded by a lack of knowledge about local socially vulnerable populations and demographics. Only a quarter of respondents indicated their organizational documents account for unequal climate vulnerability in their community, while the remainder either do not know or are confident their organization’s documents do not.

Together this represents a tremendous area of opportunity to grow relationships and increase the social cohesion and solidarity that is a key factor of community resilience in difficult times. While the impacts of such work cannot be easily measured, they are invaluable for overall preparations and especially for those mostly likely to experience the worst outcomes of climate disasters and least likely to reap the benefits of mitigation and adaptation efforts.

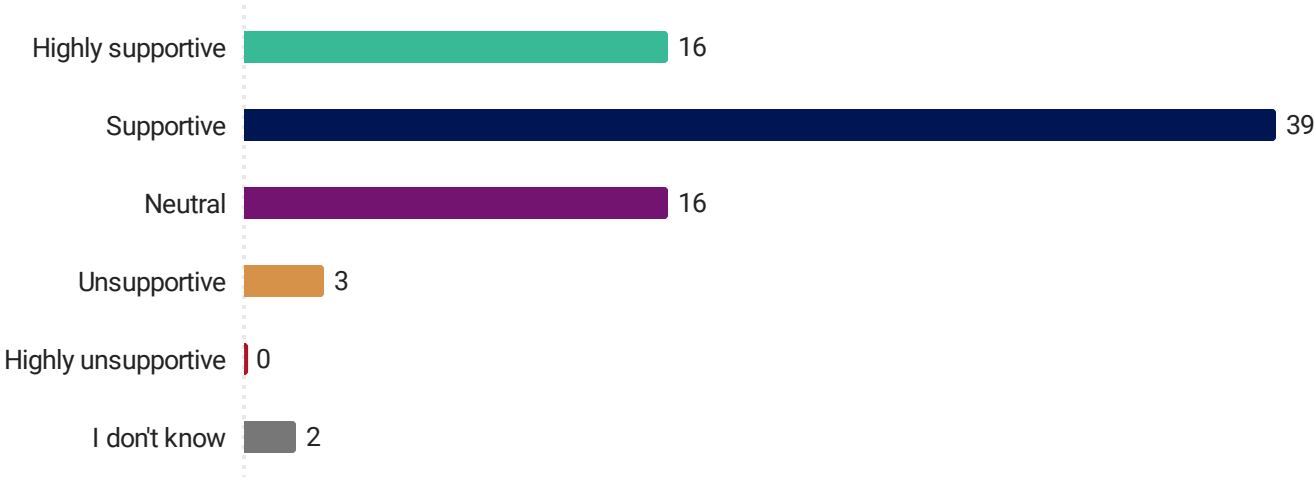
3.0 Demonstrate institutional leadership on climate change

Lead within libraries and the wider library sector and advocate for transformational change. Create and strengthen positions and responsibilities related to climate justice and support library workers who contribute to this work. Support a culture of engagement, mobilization, and advocacy on climate action.

Acknowledge the negative contributions libraries have made to climate change and its underlying causes – colonialism, capitalism, and inequality – and support actions that use an equity lens. Also, communicate the crucial roles libraries play in short-term climate emergency responses; long-term community resilience, education, and empowerment; and the positive ways in which libraries mitigate climate change.

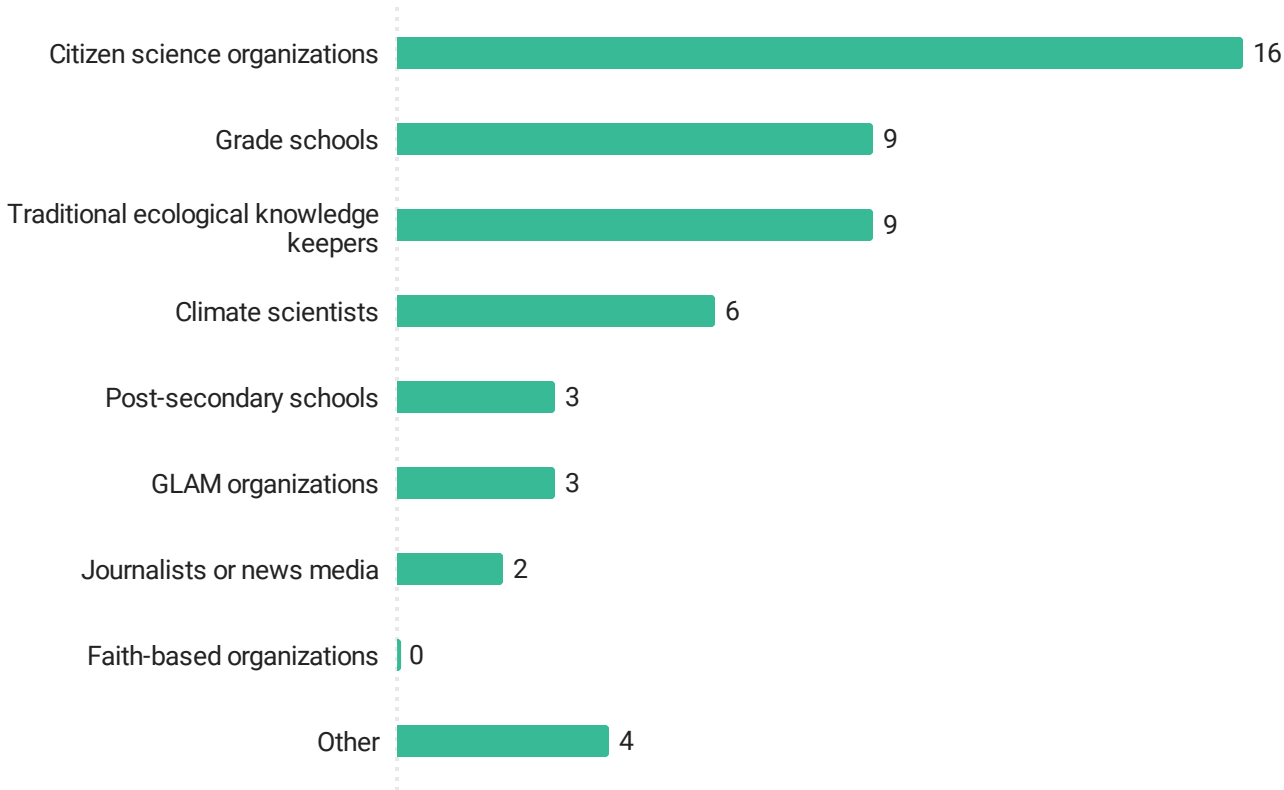
3.1 Has your organization demonstrated support for an internal culture of engagement, mobilization, and advocacy on climate action?

e.g. vocal support for climate-related initiatives; willingness to discuss organizational climate impacts; resourcing climate work, etc.



- Encouragingly, over half of respondents said their organization was supportive or highly supportive of an internal culture of engagement, mobilization, and advocacy on climate action.

3.2 Has your organization collaborated on climate initiatives with other culture or knowledge organizations?



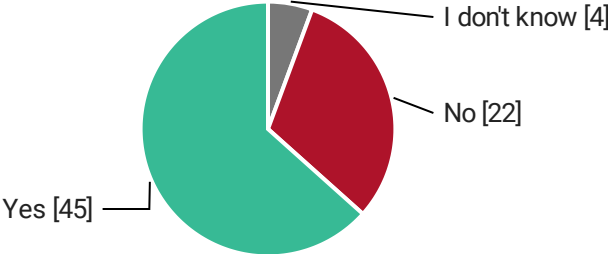
- In keeping with the theme of building relationships, 26% of respondents identified their organization as having collaborated with other cultural or knowledge organizations on climate initiatives. Citizen science organizations were the most popular and, interestingly, working with other GLAM organizations and news media was much less common. Faith-based organizations were the least common, with no respondents indicating having taken part in a collaborative climate initiative with these groups.
- Collaboration outside of the library represents a key area where libraries are positioned to bring cultural heritage entities and institutions together around climate action, with all aspects offering important avenues for mobilizing against climate change. Participatory approaches such as citizen science and mapping are crucial, as is making the expertise and experience of specialists such as climate scientists and traditional ecological knowledge keepers more accessible. Working in schools is critical for informing the next generation that will have to live through the consequences of our present actions.

Teaming up with other GLAM and media organizations can offer innovative multimodal programming that reaches community members who may be less interested in conventional programs and collections. Finally, though libraries, as a secular institution, may feel an uneasy fit with faith-based organizations, they often possess histories and networks of informally organizing to help out neighbours in response to natural disasters and climate impacts. Rather than avoid faith-based organizations altogether, neutrality can be achieved by connecting with multiple faiths and denominations. Moreover, building bridges with these organizations can make inroads towards folks that may value different knowledge authorities than academics and scientists.

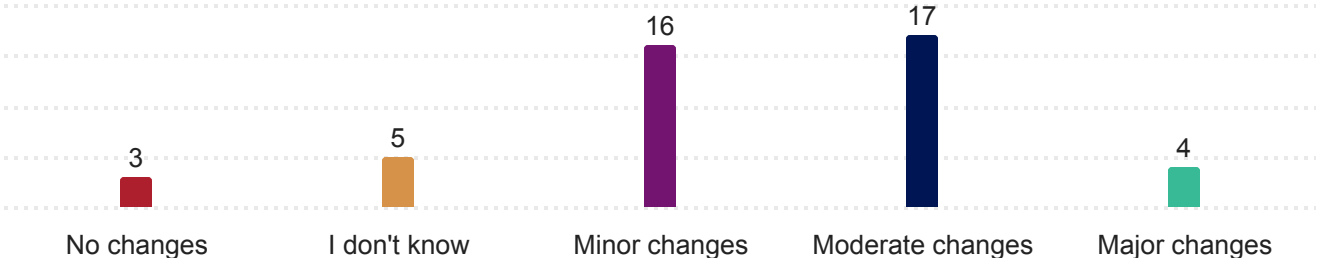
4.0 Embed climate justice into library policies and plans

Establish climate justice-based standards and frameworks that will guide library institutions and organizations, and fulfill these commitments. Embed climate justice in strategic frameworks, policies, and operational practices throughout the organization such as investment, procurement, development and planning, health and safety, programming, etc. Ensure libraries have forward thinking climate emergency preparedness plans that take into account increasing risks.

4.1 Does your organization’s strategic plan include any climate-related language or direction? e.g. climate action, climate justice, environmental sustainability, etc.

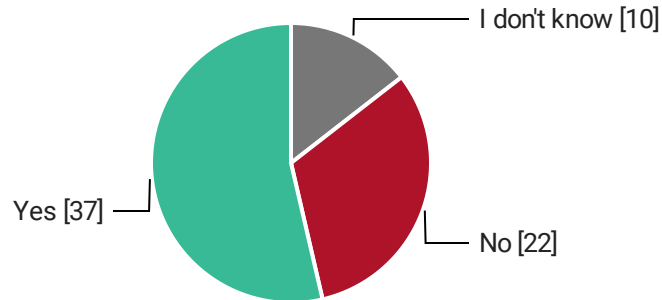


4.2 To what extent has your organization changed its operations or infrastructure in the last two years because of those aspects in your strategic plan?

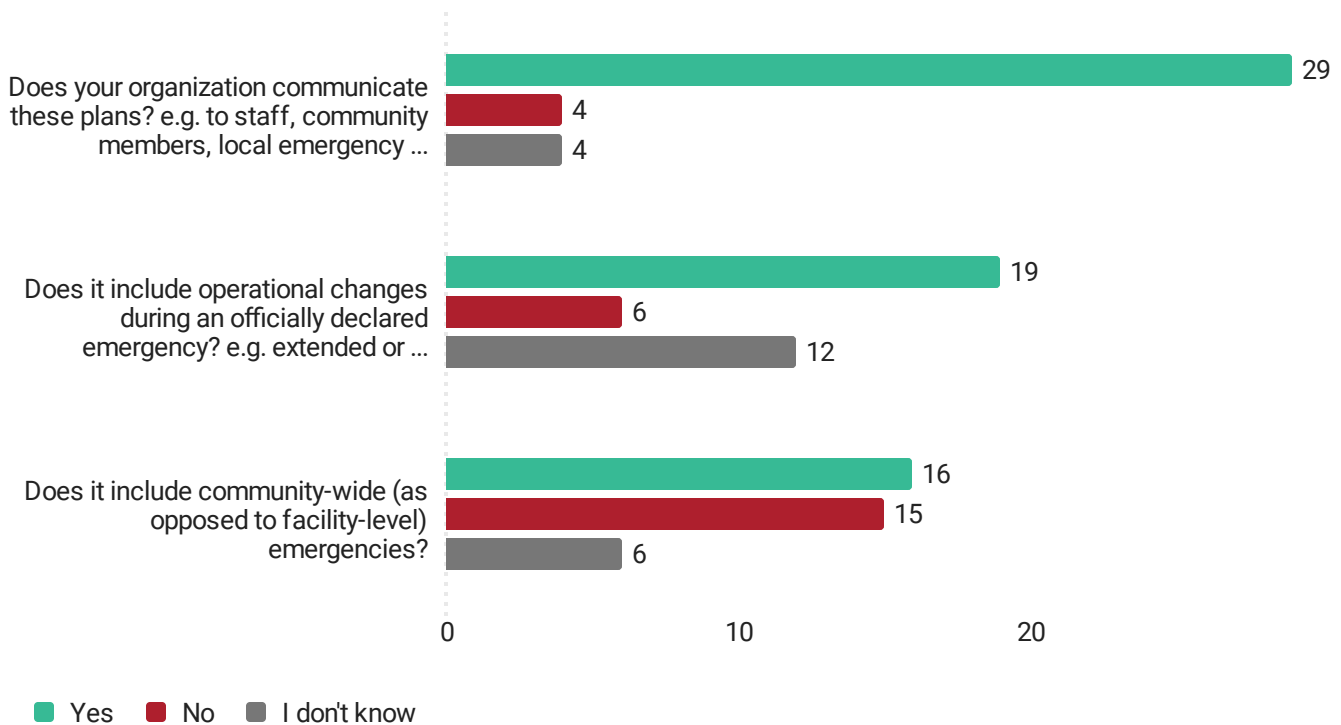


- Over 40% of respondents said their strategic plan included climate-related language or direction and, of those respondents, 82% reported that their organization had made a change based on these aspects of their strategic plan.

4.3 Does your organization have contingency plans that account for the most likely climate impacts predicted for your region or community?
e.g. Emergency Preparedness, Continuity of Service, etc.

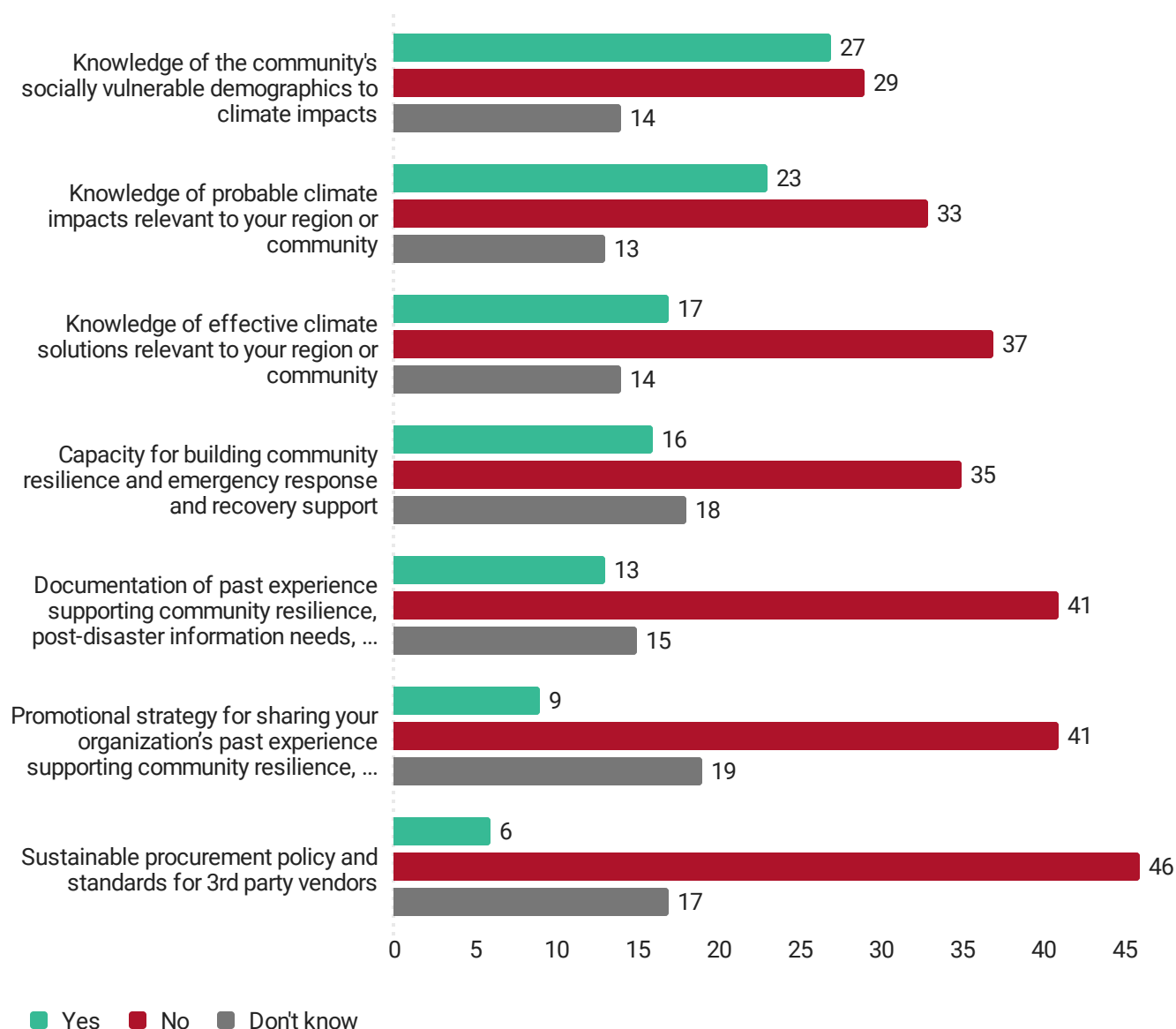


4.4 With respect to these contingency plans accounting for climate impacts:



A fair number of respondents reported that the most likely climate impacts predicted for their organization's region or community were commonly referenced in both strategic documents, policies, or procedures (21.5%) and contingency plans (34.5%). With respect to the organizations making these contingency plans, only 42% of respondents indicated active communication of the plan, only 27.5% believed their organization's plan included operational changes during an officially declared emergency, and less than a quarter were seen to include a community-wide emergency (as opposed to one occurring at the facility-level). This may indicate emergency planning as an area of growth within the provincial library sector.

4.5 Does your organization's current strategic documents, policies or procedures include the following?



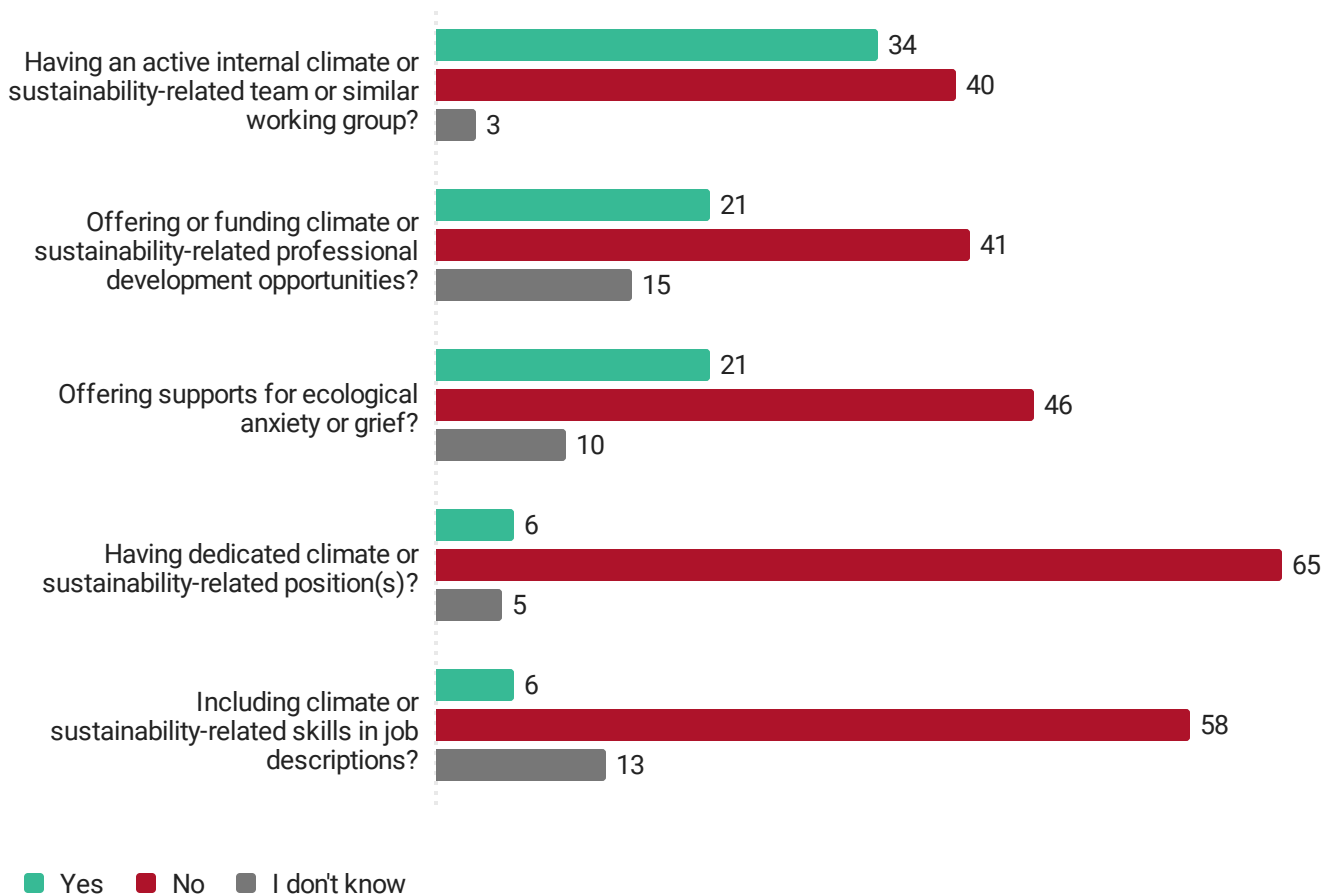
- As stated earlier, 25% of respondents stated their organization’s strategic documents, policies, or procedures contained “knowledge of the community’s socially vulnerable demographics to climate impacts”.
- Other examples of climate-related language were scarce in the sector’s strategic documents, policies, and procedures.
- Less than 20% of respondents reported organizational strategies referencing effective climate solutions relevant to the community; the organization’s capacity for building community resilience and emergency response and recovery support; and documentation of past organizational experiences supporting community resilience.
- Less than 10% of respondents reported an organizational strategy for promoting their organization’s past experience supporting community resilience.
- Only 5% of respondents believed their organization’s strategic documents, policies, or procedures included a sustainable procurement policy and standards for third party vendors.
- Individual respondents generously shared several exemplary best practices in emergency planning including tabletop exercises and extreme weather event protocols. COVID-19 was seen to motivate continuity planning in some organizations, however maintaining readiness as time has elapsed and staff has turned over was raised as an issue.

Though strategic plans can sometimes be dismissed as talk>action, our results suggest that they may influence library organizations in meaningful ways. Given 20% of respondents reported their organizations had not yet included any climate-related language in their strategic planning, this represents a relatively low-cost area of improvement. Similarly, the overwhelming lack of sustainable procurement policies and standards for vendors means that libraries are underleveraging their collective influence and purchasing power, as highlighted earlier in section 1.0 Advocacy. Finally, beginning to document and measure the valuable role libraries have taken on to support climate resilience in our communities will be critical to ensuring they are adequately resourced if the impacts continue to worsen.

5.0 Increase climate emergency education and capacity building for learners and employees in the library sector

Increase education and capacity within the library sector. Integrate climate emergency education into library and information studies programs and professional experience placements. Expand climate emergency professional development, learning, and training opportunities for employees.

5.1 Has your organization increased staff capacity for climate crisis response by:



- Respondents were far more likely to report that their organization had not increased its staff's capacity for climate action during the period surveyed, or were unaware of such efforts, whether by offering or funding climate or sustainability-related training or professional development opportunities to employees or members.
- On the other hand, nearly 30% of respondents say their organizations were increasing staff climate crisis capacity through an internal sustainability-related working group.

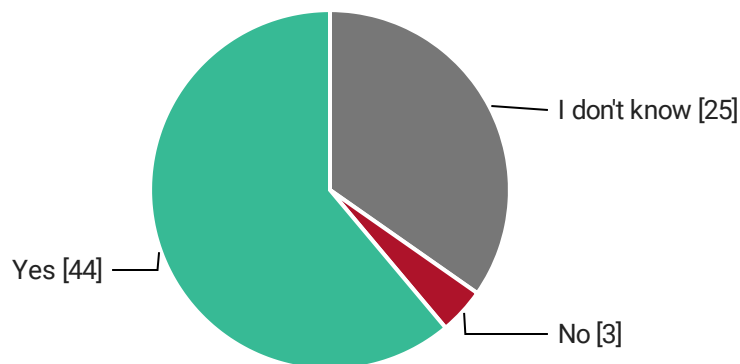
- Almost 20% of respondents knew of organizational supports for ecological anxiety. Compare with 25% of respondents indicating their organization had been indirectly affected by climate change through “loss of staff, staff time, increased staff turnover or staff burnout” in section 0.0 on climate impacts.
- Just over 5% of respondents reported a dedicated climate position, or the inclusion of sustainability-related skills in their job descriptions.

Increasing climate-related professional development offerings from BCLA and identifying other relevant professional development opportunities, such as Incident Command System (ICS) training, ecological grieving circles, and the BC Heritage Emergency Response Network’s Salvage workshop, offer ways to enhance climate capacity in provincial library organizations. Climate-related curricula may also represent an area of promise for LIS programs, and a way to distinguish themselves and their graduates in a competitive environment, or inspire collaboration among academic programs. Integrating climate-related training directly into MLIS programs could relieve some pressure on individual library organizations, and help set the sector up for a resilient future.

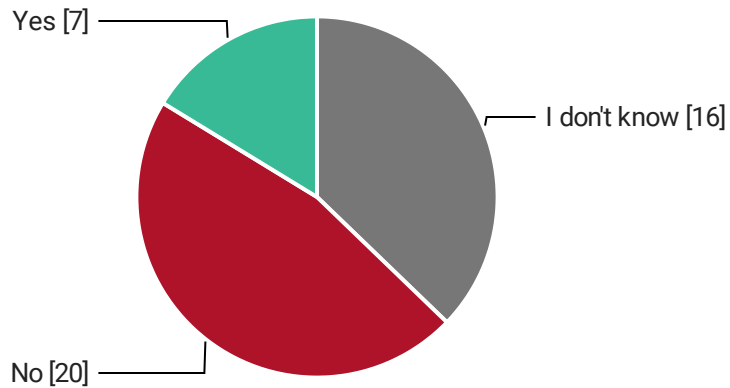
6.0 Work with governments and broader institutions

Coordinate with local governments and parent institutions on climate action initiatives. Ensure libraries are included in local government and institutional plans and efforts. Provide reporting on progress and communicate the roles of libraries in climate action. Advocate for funding to facilitate this work.

6.1 Does your funding municipality or parent organization have a formal climate action strategy?



6.2 If yes, or if one is currently in development, is your organization explicitly referenced or included?



- The number of respondents reporting their funding municipality or parent organizations had a formal climate action strategy was similar to the number of respondents that said their strategic plan included climate-related language or direction (~40%). However, only 16% of those respondents (or 6.5% overall) reported their organization was explicitly referenced within those plans.

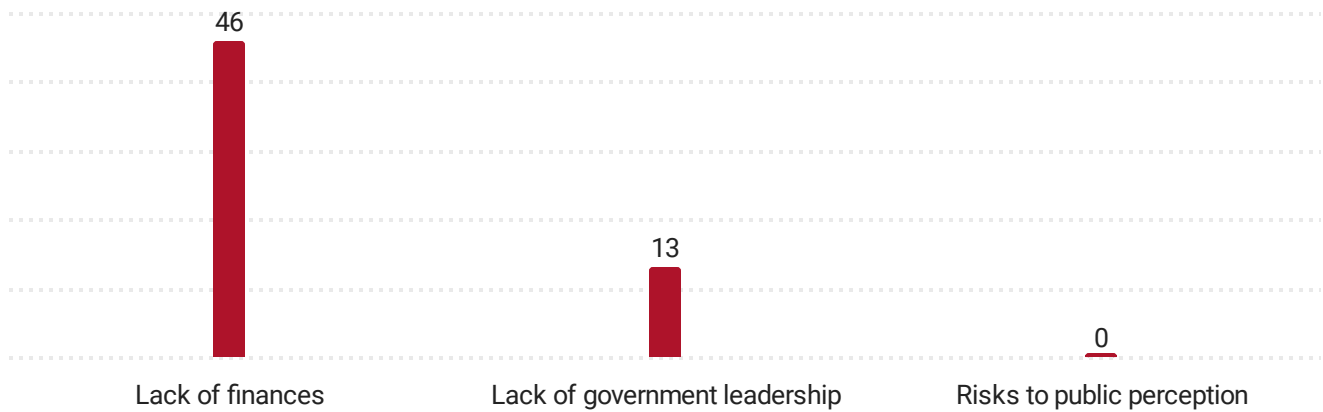
6.3 Has your organization worked with federal or provincial government agencies; First Nations, Inuit, or Métis governments; and/or community/municipal services to collaborate on climate-related emergency response plans?

e.g. public dialogues, climate education campaigns, sharing economy infrastructure, adaptation or emergency planning, etc.

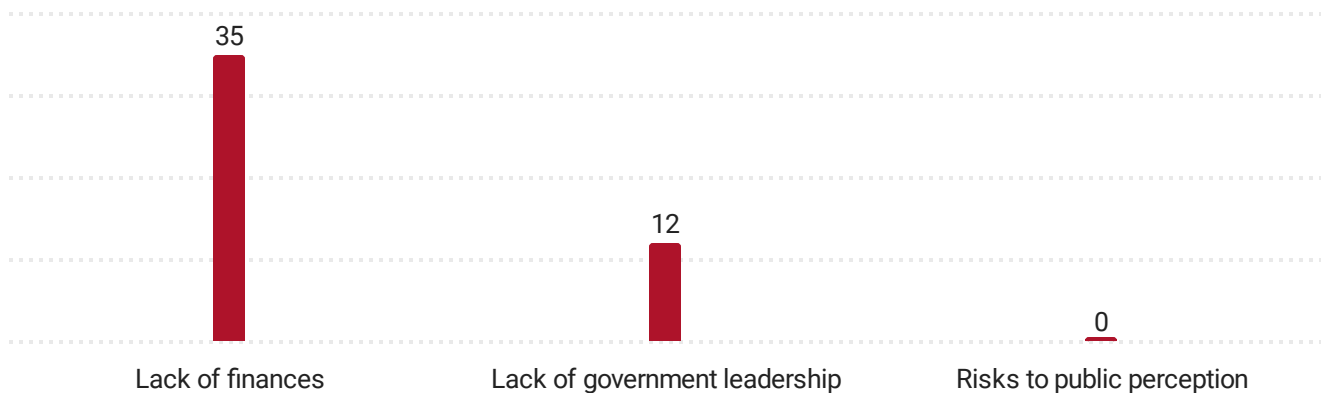


- Tying back to earlier discussions around a communications gap at the municipal level, less than 20% of respondents reported working with municipal agencies to collaborate on climate-related emergency response plans. As discussed in the section addressing climate justice, 2.0, very few respondents reported their organization was working with First Nations, Inuit or Metis governments (2) and this held true for working with provincial or federal agencies (2).

6.4 Has your organization encountered any obstacles adapting to climate impacts?

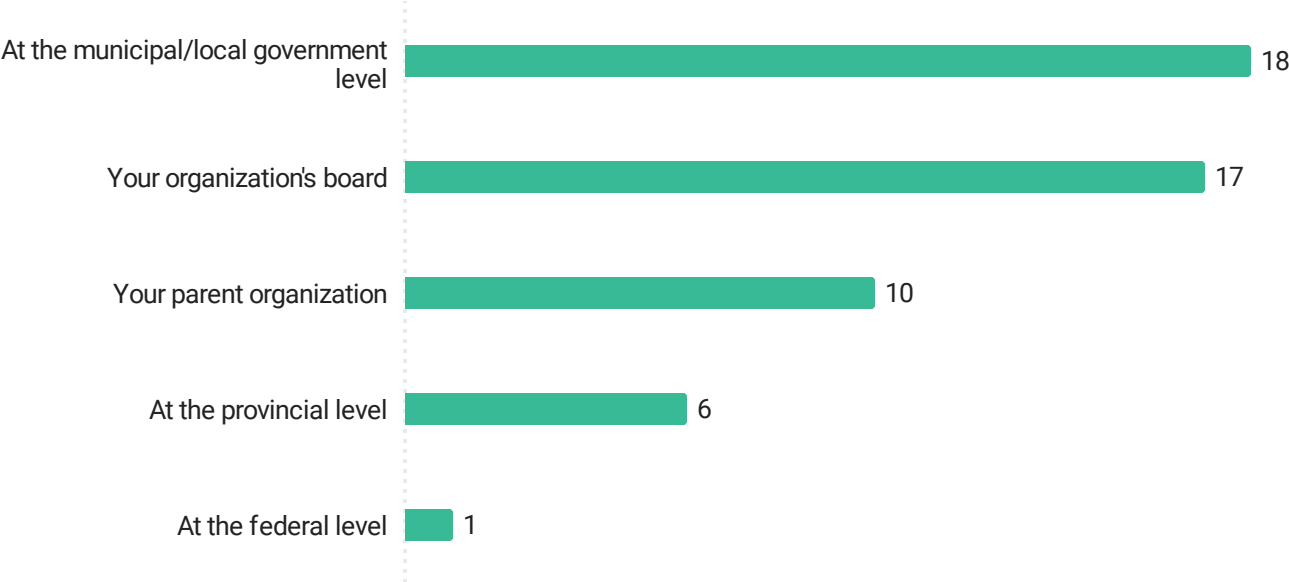


6.5 Has your organization encountered any obstacles reducing your greenhouse gas emissions?



- Similarly, on the prior topic of adequate resourcing, respondents most commonly cited a lack of finances as an obstacle to their organization's efforts at mitigating or adapting to climate change (33% and 43% respectively), with ~12% also citing a lack of government leadership.

6.6 Has your organization advocated for increased funding in order to take climate action, with any of the following?



- Just under half of respondents said their organization had advocated for increased funding most commonly to their local government or board, less commonly to a parent organization, rarely at the provincial level, and almost never at the federal level.

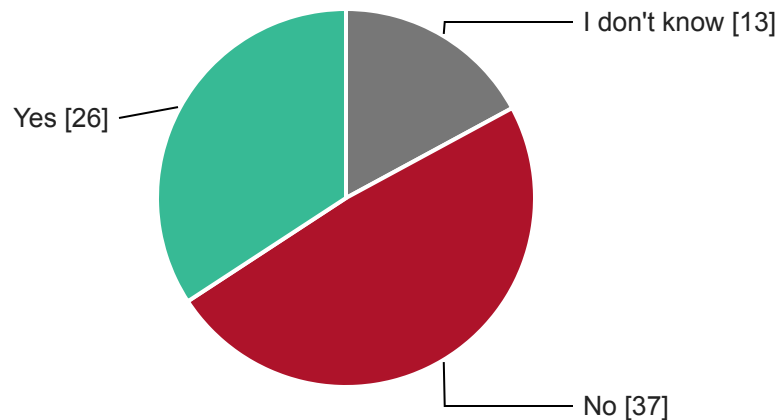
We encourage libraries to continue having frank and open conversations around funding climate work in BC libraries given the way they are increasingly being positioned as public adaptation infrastructure and the immense potential they have for convening climate conversations, distributing trustworthy climate knowledge, and building consensus on climate mitigation strategies. Collaboration and strategic coordination is a key part of this work. As community hubs, libraries are important sites where relationships between community members and governments can be established, taking particular care to connect with local First Nations and to include community members who don't typically have easy access to elected representatives or officials.

7.0 Partner with community organizations

Increase resilience in organizations and communities by strengthening connections and relationships. Partner with local organizations and groups and provide support. Facilitate sharing of climate justice knowledge and expertise that is important for the community.

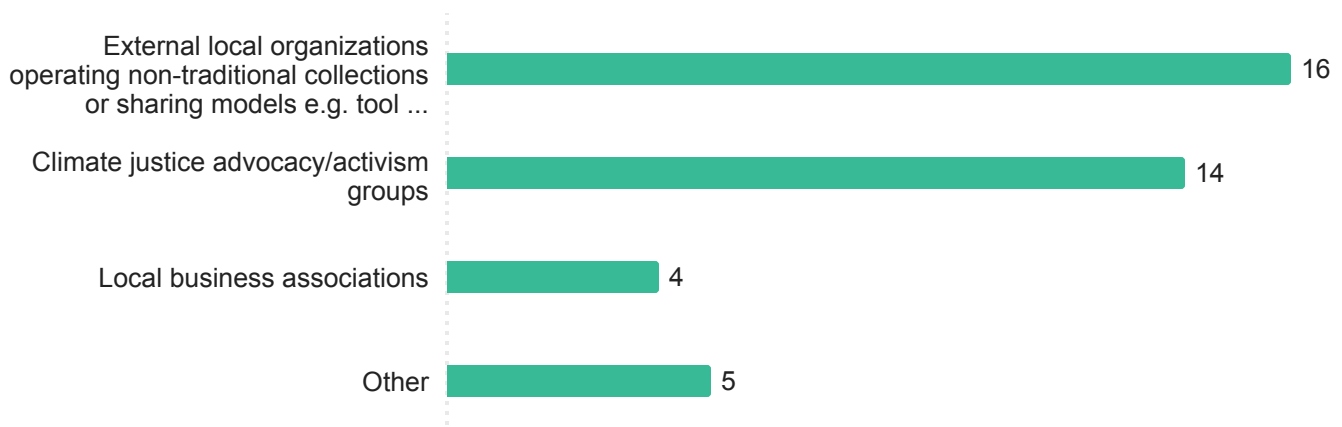
7.1 Has your organization hosted climate community development programming?

e.g. climate hub, facilitated community conversations, town-hall, future visioning, etc.



- When it comes to convening conversations in the community, 24% of respondents reported their library hosted community development programming focused on the climate during the survey period.

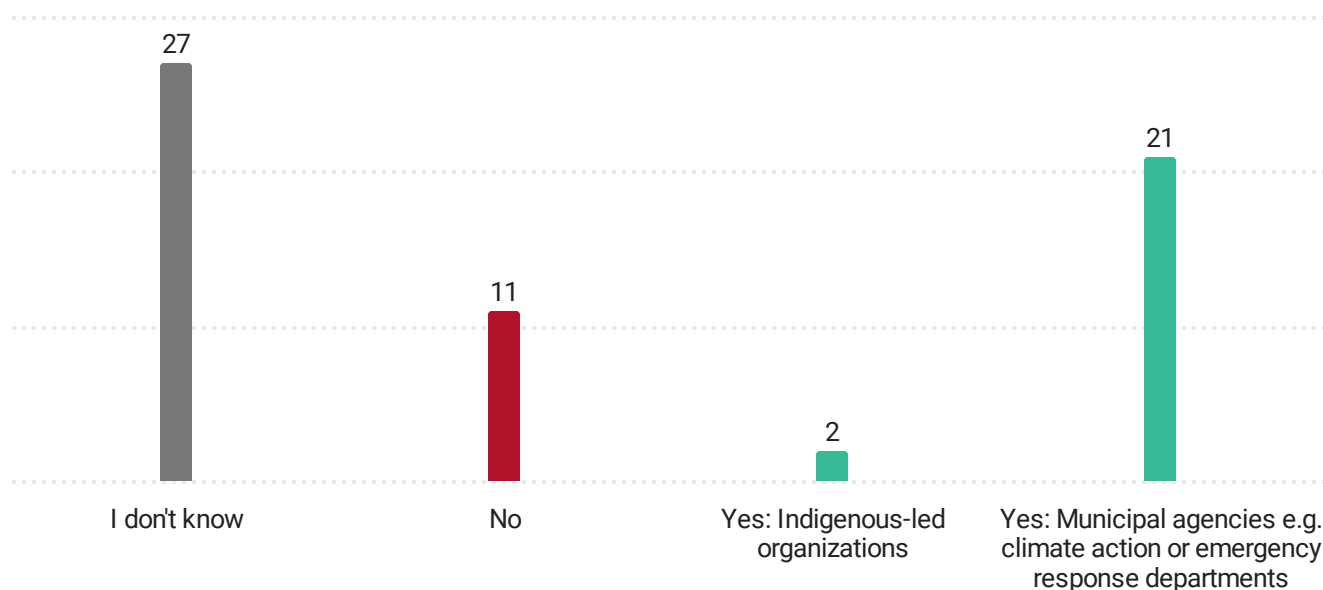
7.2 Has your organization collaborated on climate initiatives with other local community organizations?



- Collaborating with external local organizations operating non-traditional collections (15%), and climate justice advocacy or activism groups (13%) was uncommon. Collaborating with local business associations was even more infrequent (3%).
- 'Other' responses included local environmental groups, student groups, university departments, and one respondent highlighting a partnership with a farmer's market

7.3 Has your organization worked with community/municipal services or Indigenous-led organizations to collaborate on climate-related emergency response plans?

e.g. public dialogues, climate education campaigns, sharing economy infrastructure, adaptation or emergency planning, etc.

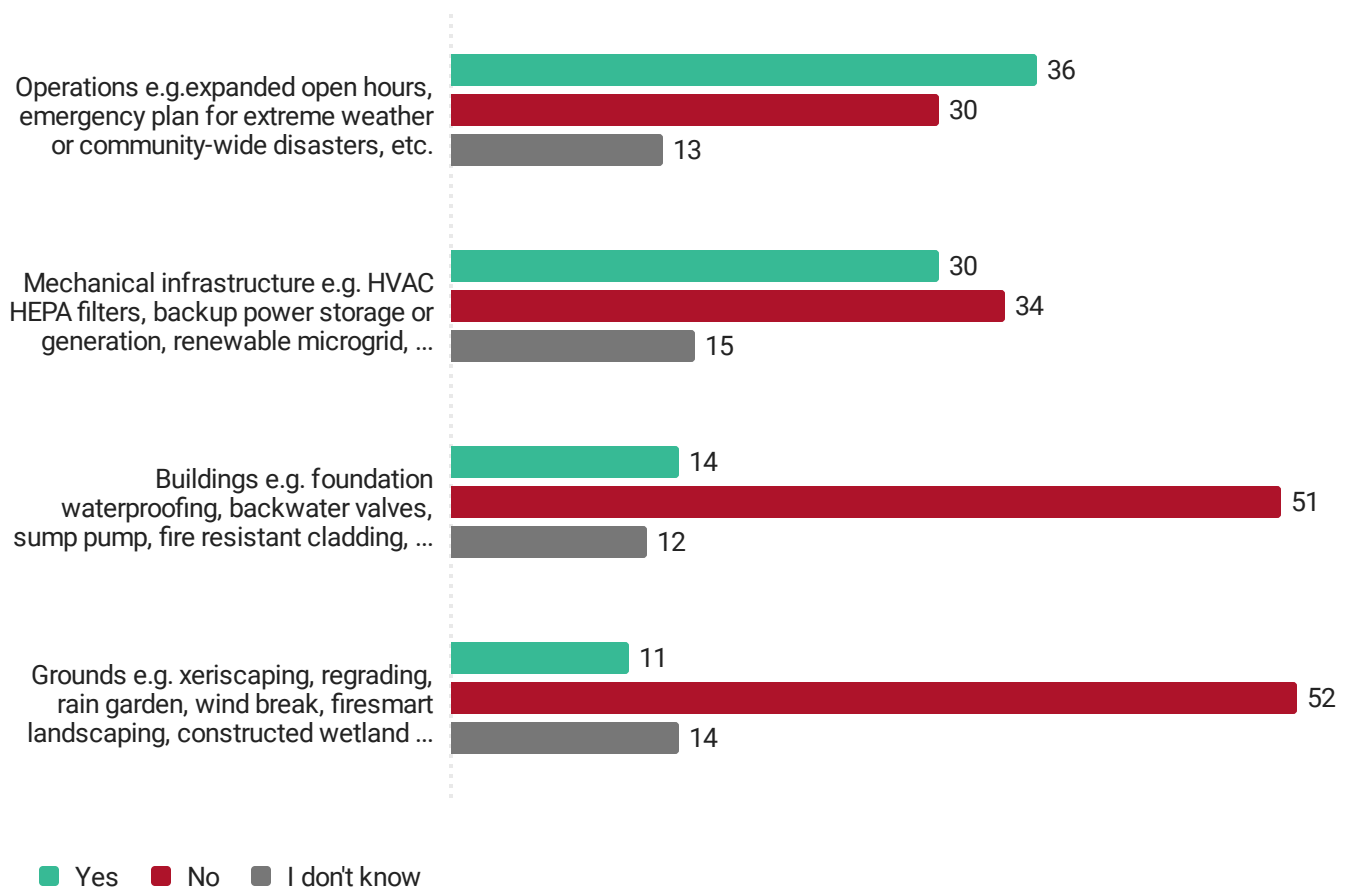


Being a vast and interconnected issue, climate work lends itself well to efforts that reach across conventional divides and silos. As discussed earlier in section 2.0, section 3.0, and section 6.0, supporting the environmental initiatives of First Nations, Inuit and Metis governments, Indigenous organizations, other cultural heritage organizations, and other municipal agencies and finding ways to coordinate library services with them offers an opportunity to build relationships and strengthen the collective work overall. While the impacts of these efforts may not be immediately apparent, we encourage libraries to actively partner and build relationships around climate action, as these relationships tend to nourish us in unexpected ways, especially in difficult times.

8.0 Support and build community resilience through programs and services

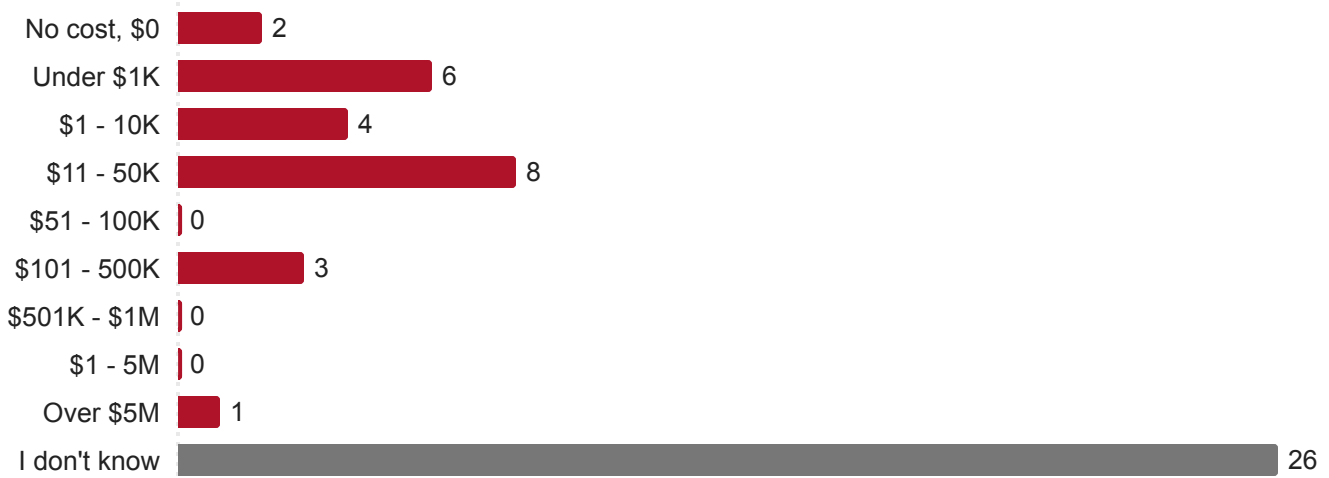
Build community capacity, health, and resilience through library services, collections, and programs, helping communities to prepare, adapt and come together in response to the climate emergency. Act as a centre for inquiry, information, discussion, community building, civic engagement, and modelling of climate action. Recognize the core role of libraries in providing access to collections, including spaces, objects, supplies, and other non-traditional collections, and further support library and community efforts to expand this sharing model.

8.1 Has your organization made any significant changes to adapt to climate impacts?



- Respondents' organizations most commonly made significant changes to operations (34%) or mechanical infrastructure (28%) in order to adapt to climate impacts. Changes to their organizations' buildings or grounds were rare, possibly due to a lack of outright property ownership.

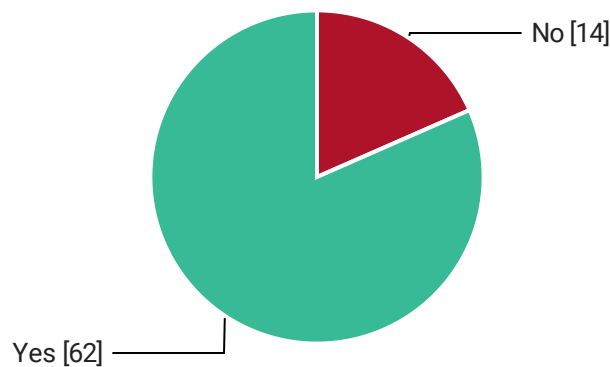
8.2 What was the estimated total cost of these changes over the past two years?



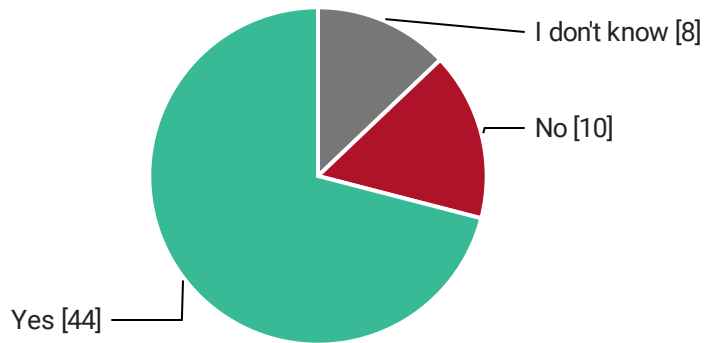
- The cost of these changes varied widely from no cost to over \$5M, with 24% of respondents stating they don't know the associated costs. A cluster of respondents reported associated costs from under \$1000 to \$50000, with \$11K - \$50K being the most commonly reported during the period surveyed. Again, the most commonly reported obstacle in adapting to climate impacts were resource constraints in the form of a lack of finances (43%), which was followed by a lack of time (26%), and a lack of organizational climate strategy, the third most common obstacle (21.5%). Social obstacles, such as risks to public perception, lack of staff support, and lack of community buy-in were the least commonly cited.

8.3 Does your organization offer non-traditional shared collections?

e.g. seeds, tools, toys, clothing, bikes, makerspace, repair cafe, community garden, community pantry, etc.



8.4 If yes, was the collection developed with its potential ecological benefits in mind?



- One of the most surprising findings was that a large majority of respondents reported offering non-traditional shared collections, and a majority of those respondents stated that it had been developed with the potential ecological benefits in mind. Nor was hosting an in-house library-of-things the only option in this direction, as 15% of respondents reported collaborating on climate initiatives with external local organizations operating non-traditional collections or sharing models. There appears to be a unique and potent opportunity in this area to support affordability and decrease consumption and its attendant energy and material costs in our communities by thoughtfully developing these services.

8.5 Has your organization collaborated on climate initiatives with external local organizations operating non-traditional collections or sharing models, e.g. tool library, community garden, etc.?

No. of respondents indicating 'Yes'  16

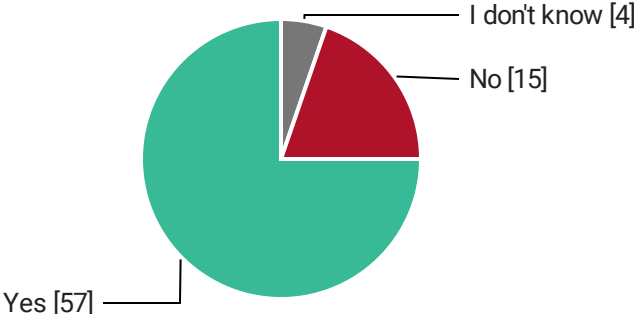
An emergent theme of this report is that, while BC libraries are making progress on ensuring our buildings and services are available throughout climate impacts to come, which is especially salient as they are formally expected to serve as public adaptation infrastructure during extreme weather events, they are also contending with a lack of adequate resources and coordinated organizational strategies to increase their adaptive capacities. It is unclear from the survey results whether respondents' organizations are not making changes because they haven't encountered a need to do so, or whether a lack of response is because they have not yet succeeded in overcoming these obstacles, or whether there is another reason altogether.

9.0 Strengthen our role in providing access to climate emergency information, countering misinformation, and supporting research and education

Provide access to rigorous, robust, and accurate information, data, collections, and reference services to support inquiry, learning, and decision making related to the climate emergency. Increase access to information and learning that will help communities mitigate, prepare, and adapt to climate change. Lead in countering misinformation and disinformation and expand information, media, and science literacy skills. Help communities imagine what change and the future will look like through accurate information, discussion, and works of the imagination. Support research and learning that addresses gaps in knowledge such as local climate solutions and impacts on underserved communities.

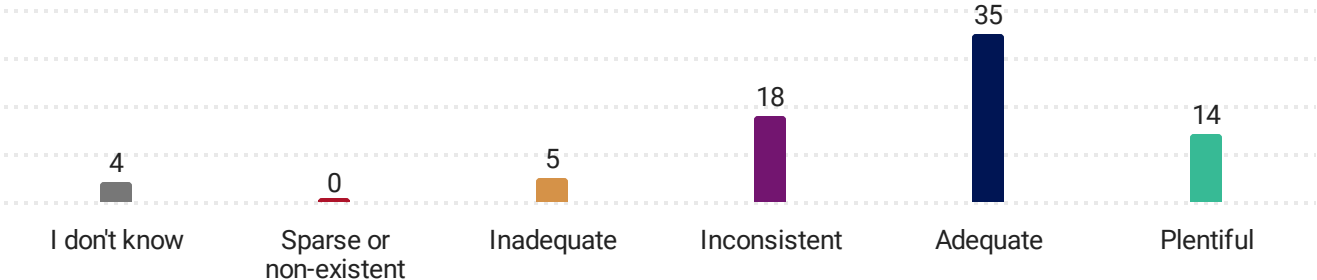
9.1 Has your organization hosted climate change related programming?

e.g. climate education, identifying or countering climate mis- and disinformation, citizen science, climate justice or activism, adaptation or emergency response, ecological anxiety/grief, repair and maintenance, upcycling, swap meets, gardening or tree planting, Library Climate Action Week, etc.



9.2 How would you characterize your organization's current physical and digital knowledge collection on climate-related topics?

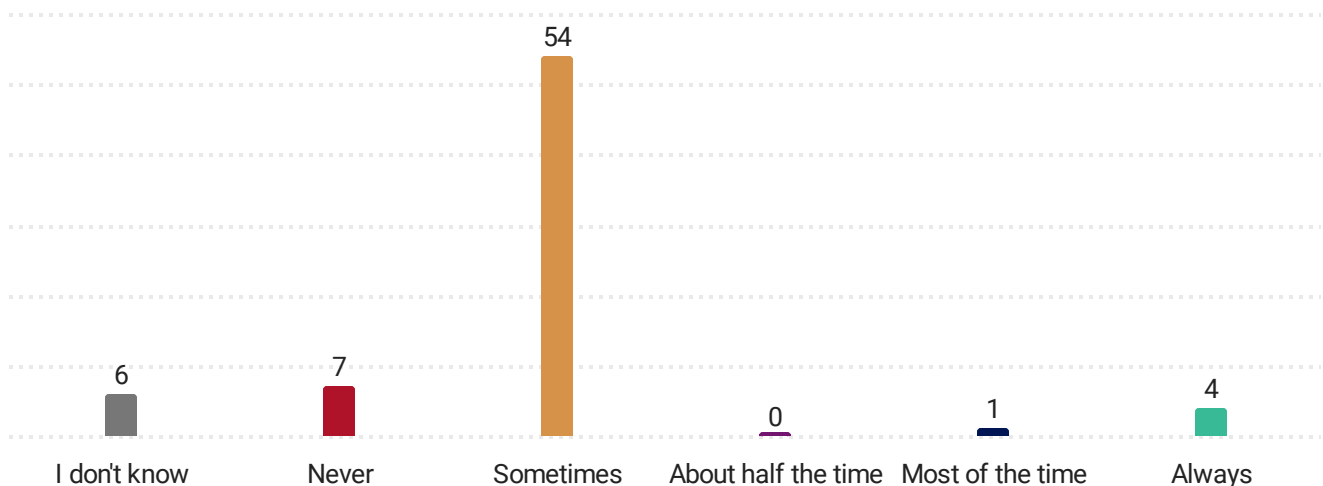
e.g. climate science, adaptive actions, climate grief or emotional responses, Indigenous knowledges, systemic inequalities or other social, economic and political aspects, etc.



- This was, as might be hoped, an area of relative strength for the provincial library sector. Over half of respondents reported their organization had hosted climate change related programming in the previous two years and almost half characterized their organization’s current physical and digital knowledge collections on climate-related topics as plentiful or adequate. Similarly, 55% reported their organization shares climate or sustainability-related information and/or resources via formal communication channels. However, 21.5% report their collections are inconsistent or inadequate. While a subjective metric, the results also indicate that half of the province’s library sector is falling short when it comes to sharing knowledge and information about climate change in proportion to the severity of its potential risks and consequences.

9.3 How frequently does your organization share climate or sustainability-related information and/or resources via your organization’s formal communication channels?

e.g. promotions, social media, newsletter, website, etc.



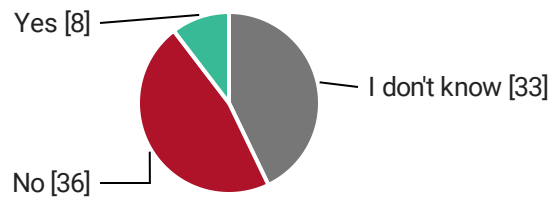
- Hopefully we will see the number of provincial libraries sharing climate knowledge and information regularly rise. A great first step is participating in the annual Library Climate Action Week each fall.

After climate-related programming and collections become consistent throughout the provincial library sector, finding creative and approachable methods for sharing and producing knowledge and understandings of climate change in our communities will be an important area of focus, whether via the library’s public communication and promotional channels, new partnerships, or other experiments in participatory cultural encounters.

10.0 Accelerate and strengthen climate change mitigation efforts to make library services and operations sustainable

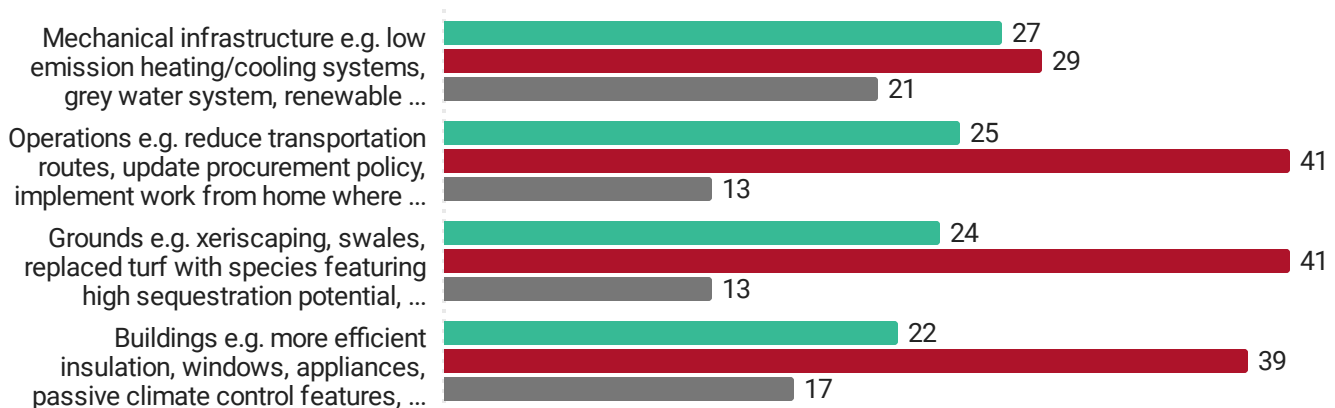
Prioritize urgent and transformative reductions in fossil fuel use. Other actions include improving sustainability criteria for investments and divesting from fossil fuels, increasing biodiversity, minimizing resource use and waste, and decreasing energy use. Assess environmental impact through audits and benchmarking and measure progress. Create support materials, guidelines, and decision making frameworks that will help achieve these objectives.

10.1 Has your organization assessed or audited the environmental impacts and/or greenhouse gas emissions it produces?



- Reducing emissions begins with an awareness of where they are being caused, yet only 7% of respondents reported their organization has assessed or audited the environmental impacts and/or greenhouse gas emissions it produces.

10.2 Has your organization made any significant changes to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions or ecological footprint? Indicate changes to:



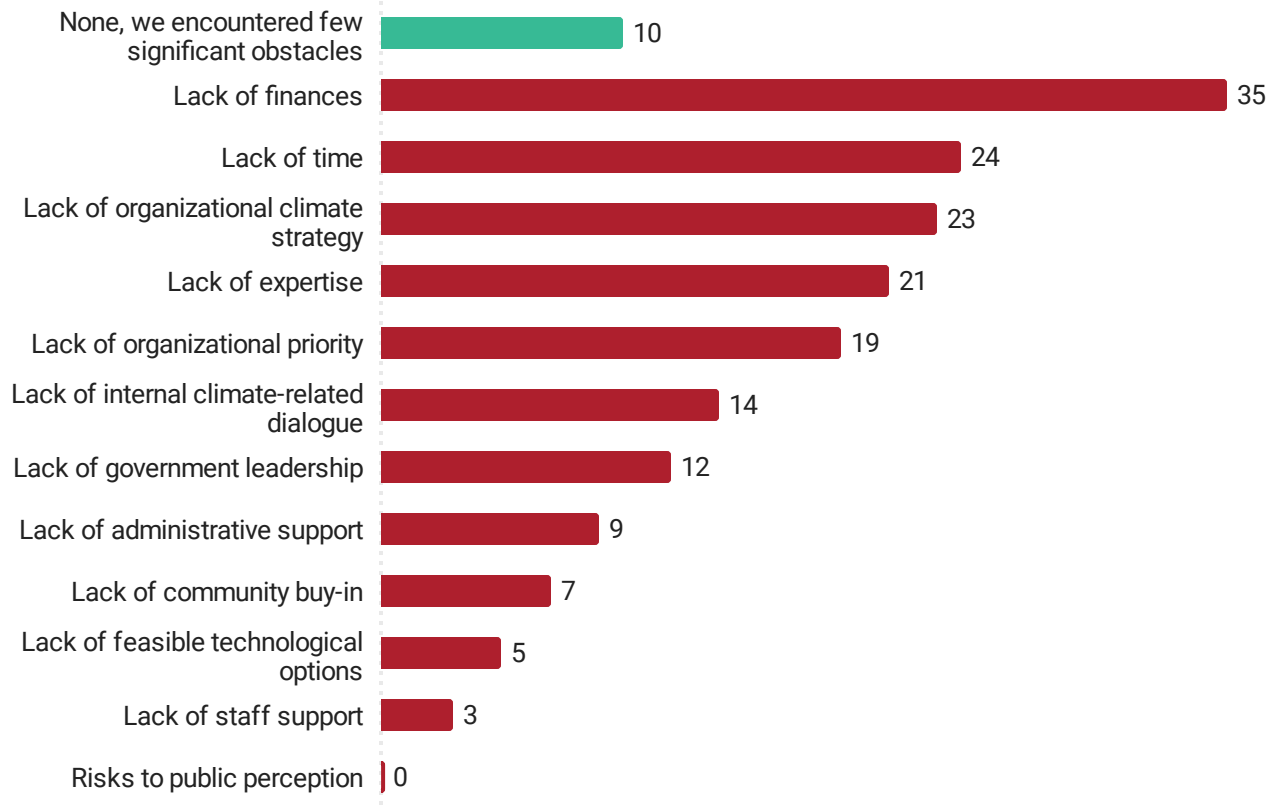
■ Yes ■ No ■ I don't know

- On the other hand, between 20 - 25% of respondents said their organization made significant changes to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions or ecological footprint, whether to their buildings (20%), mechanical infrastructure (27%), grounds (22%), or operations (23%). The difference in consistency between these mitigative changes and the adaptive changes in section 8.0 is unclear.

10.3 What was the estimated total cost of these changes over the past two years?

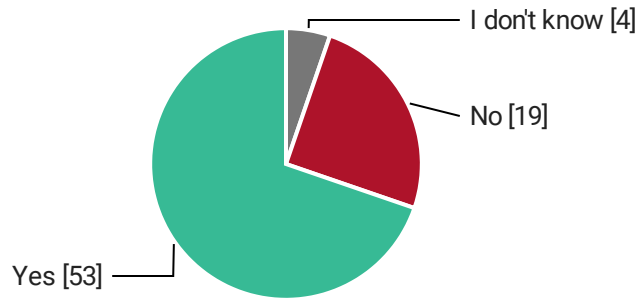


10.4 Has your organization encountered any obstacles reducing greenhouse gas emissions?



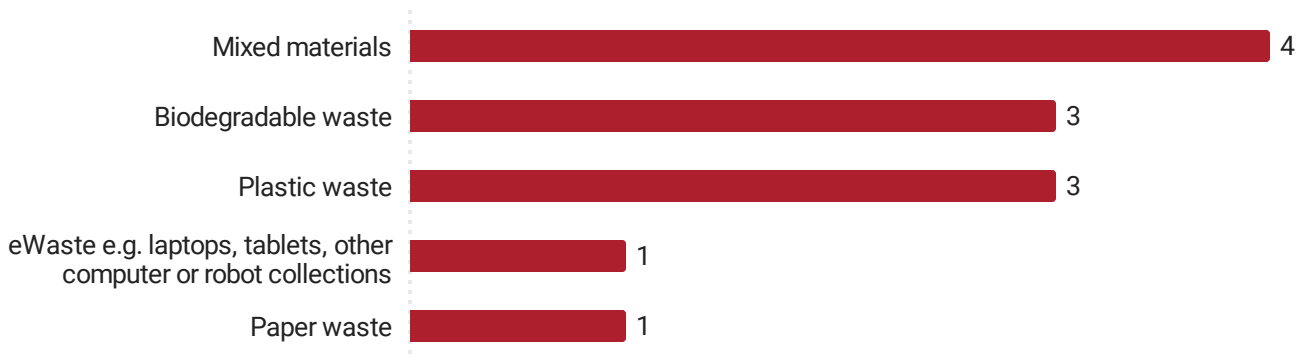
- 26% of respondents were unable to report on the costs of these changes, similar to the lack of awareness of adaptive costs. Lack of finances, time, and an organizational climate strategy were commonly cited as obstacles, the same as in section 8.0.

10.5 Does your organization have access to facilities to reuse or recycle most physical collection materials weeded from its collections?



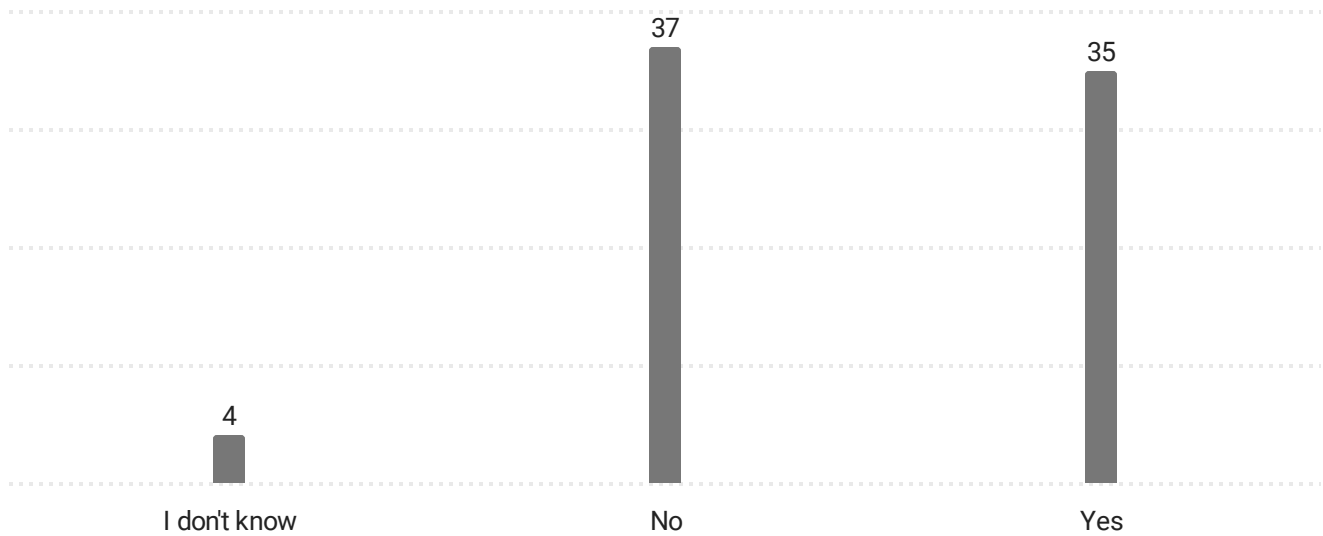
- About half of respondents say they have access to facilities to reuse or recycle most of their physical collection materials. For those who don't, books and optical media represent the vast majority of collection materials they are unable to dispose of in a sustainable manner.

10.6 What types of non-collection waste are you unable to dispose of in a sustainable manner?

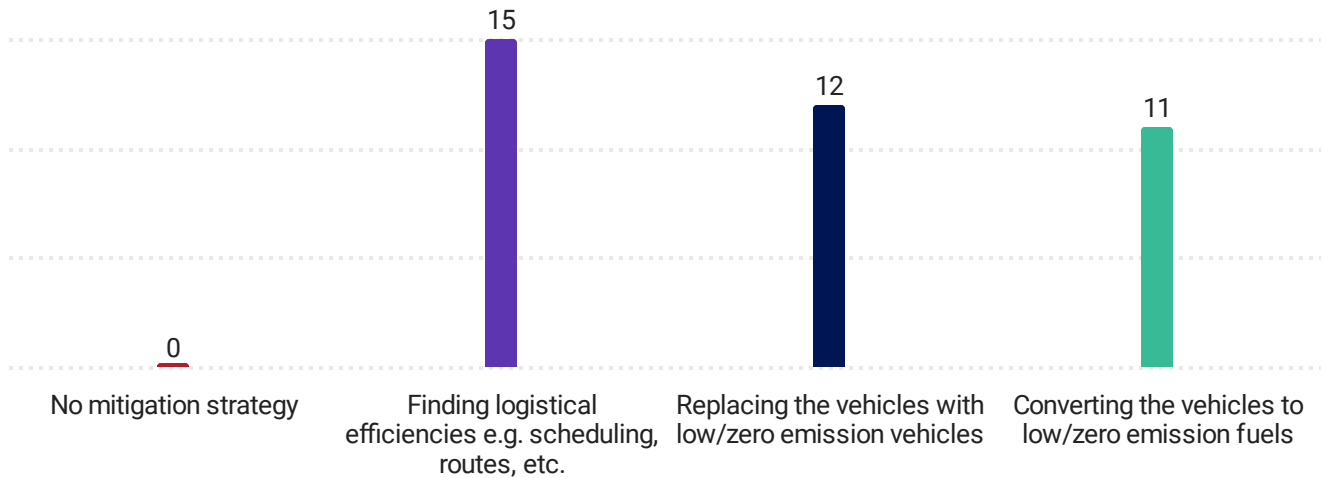


- In contrast, the majority of respondents reported that they do have access to facilities to reuse or recycle most of their non-collection waste, though mixed materials, biodegradables, and plastic are troublesome for a few.

10.7 Does your organization own or lease any institutional vehicles?

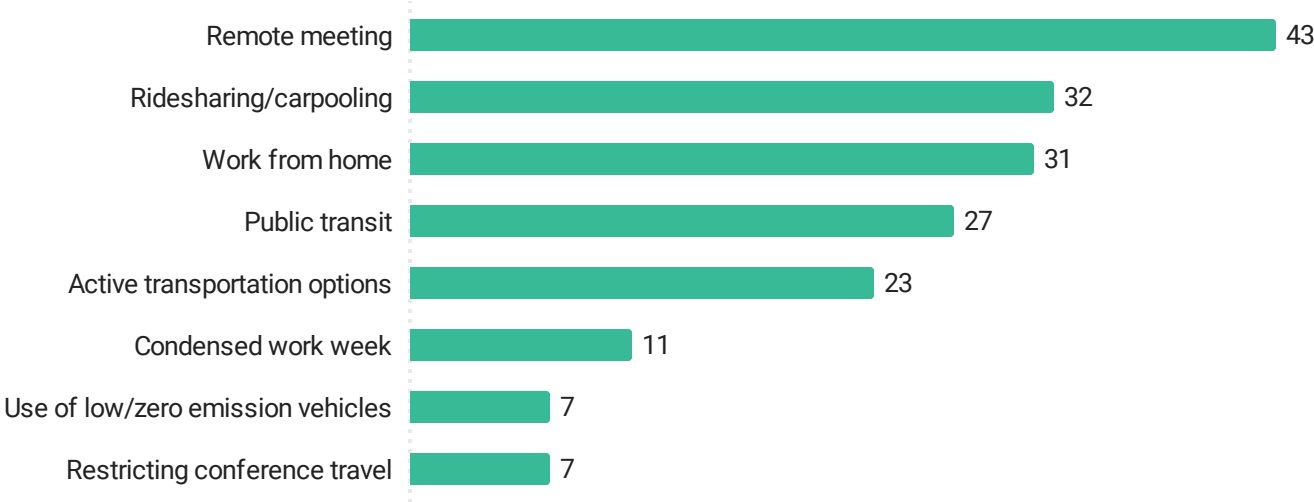


10.8 How is your organization mitigating the greenhouse gases emitted by its fleet?



- Nearly one-third of respondents said their organization owned or leased institutional vehicles. Of those, about one-third reported strategies for mitigating fleet greenhouse gas emissions, with logistical efficiencies proving the most popular strategy, though replacing or converting vehicles to low or zero emission fuels was, perhaps surprisingly, almost as commonly cited. Obstacles to reducing fleet emissions were the standard lack of finances, lack of time, and lack of organizational priority or strategy.

10.9 Has your organization mitigated the impacts of staff travel by encouraging, incentivizing, or facilitating:



- Mitigating the impacts of staff travel was most popularly accomplished by encouraging, incentivizing, or facilitating remote meetings (40%), though there was a wide spread of other common strategies that included encouraging, incentivizing, or facilitating ridesharing/carpooling, working from home arrangements, as well as public and active transportation options. 10% of respondents reported accommodations for a condensed work week at their organization. A few restricted conference travel, or were able to encourage/incentivize/facilitate low/zero emission vehicles.

Libraries can model climate leadership by taking transformative action to reduce fossil fuel use in their own operations where possible. The sector’s emissions are deeply entwined with the rest of our society’s infrastructure meaning that, while there is a lot of work to do in terms of mitigation, our agency in this area can be limited. Beginning an emissions assessment can be a useful step in identifying the areas with a high cost-benefit ratio. Engaging in sector-wide efforts to identify and advocate for sustainable book and optical media disposal, recycling, or reuse options will benefit everyone. With both library fleets and staff travel, finding logistical efficiencies and technological solutions to reduce the need for travel seems to be a good strategy.

2021 & prior

By including only 2022 and 2023 experiences, significant climate impacts were excluded. For each section of the survey, we asked respondents to comment on any 2021 and prior climate-related library experiences and impacts they wanted to share.

Direct and indirect climate impacts 2021 & prior

A wide variety of historically significant extreme weather events were shared, including:

- May 2018 boundary floods, closing libraries and causing >\$300,000 in damages.
- June 2021 heat dome, causing extreme high temperatures for several days throughout the province, resulting in community health impacts and loss of life. Some libraries extended hours and services to provide temperature relief as shelters (for people and pets) and, in other cases, the heat dome created gaps in work hours and collection access due to library closures where HVAC systems were unable to provide relief. Participants noted significant stress and grief among staff.
- November/December Pacific Northwest 2021 atmospheric river rains, flooding and landslides. These caused extensive road closures on key routes, including Highway 1, breaking the transportation supply routes for basic necessities and library collection materials, as well as staff commutes. Floods caused mass evacuation of the Matsqui flats in Chilliwack and Abbotsford. All these impacts increased pressure on libraries to provide emergency information and shelter, while demanding adaptation in staffing models.
- Wildfires caused internet outages, as well as poor air quality and limited visibility, putting pressure on library HVAC systems to provide clean air. Library service models were changed to offer extended hours and shelter service. In some cases road closures have also impacted staff commutes and supply/materials transportation routes. Wildfires are also known to be responsible for the loss of at least two library buildings in recent years (TNRL's Lytton in 2021 and ORL's Scotch Creek in 2023).

Indirect impacts were also discussed:

- COVID-19 pandemic, a worldwide event impacting BC libraries in unprecedented ways. Library material and supply logistics were interrupted and in person library service was prohibited during a time of increased community need for information and safe shelter. Libraries responded in a variety of ways, including library closures, extended online service, work from home models, contact-free service models, increased facility cleaning and the provision of PPE such as masks and sanitizers. Grief and anxiety affected communities and library staff.
- "climactic extremes coinciding with COVID-19 have affected disease exposure, increased susceptibility of people to COVID-19, compromised emergency responses, and reduced health system resilience to multiple stresses [...] long-term climate change

and prepandemic vulnerabilities have increased COVID-19 risk for some populations (eg, marginalised communities)”

- Ford, J. D., Zavaleta-Cortijo, C., Ainembabazi, T., Anza-Ramirez, C., Arotoma-Rojas, I., Bezerra, J., ... & Wright, C. (2022). Interactions between climate and COVID-19. *The Lancet Planetary Health*, 6(10), e825-e833.
- Other indirect impacts may be widespread but less able to compete for resources, as they are not recognized as emergencies.
- Misinformation and disinformation was highlighted as a key area of influence for libraries, in a context of limited funding and resources.

Staff, programming, collections, logistics 2021 & prior

Academic libraries shine for incorporating early climate action efforts, including:

- Incorporating climate action into library instruction.
- Support for staff commute options such as discounted transit passes, incentives to participate in Bike to Work week, or bike share programs.
- Guidance around conference travel decisions.

Libraries had mixed results for transportation and fleets:

- Rural communities may have no public transport options available, while service areas for rural libraries can be very large.
- Telecommuting and remote work were options during COVID-19 shutdowns in some BC libraries. Remote access continues for monthly Board meetings.
- Fleet efficiencies were for economic benefit, not necessarily intended for environmental impact.

Little effort was made to host climate-related programming or to host library programs in climate-friendly ways:

- One mentioned library displays and events. One other mentioned low waste refreshments
- One mentioned the difficulty of serving both community members who are concerned about climate change and those that are climate skeptics

Libraries have limited options for collections maintenance:

- Libraries sell discarded materials to reduce waste.
- Unsold books typically discarded, no cohesive provincial recycling option available. One library mentions working with local companies to remove covers/binding and recycle pages.

Buildings may not have received environmentally conscious upgrades:

- Just one library mentioned installing efficient hot water pumps, heat pumps, air units, roofing and LED lighting upgrades.

Buildings may not be owned by the library itself but by their municipality.

- Another respondent reported that their library adapted by running air purifiers during smoke hours.

Evidence of early 'green' committees:

- Some climate working groups were in place prior to 2021.

Staff supports limited:

- Collective agreement language put in place for wildfire leave.
- Counselling service in place to assist staff.
- Persisting issues associated with being under-resourced and understaffed. Under these conditions climate work can be seen as beyond scope or simply unattainable.

Advocacy, collaboration, outreach, communication 2021 & prior

Academic libraries led the way in early advocacy efforts and relationship building, including:

- Across campuses, including collaborating with sustainability-related student groups.
- Indigenous relationship building and leadership.
- Library participation on campus-wide task forces, visioning, strategic planning, and climate action plans..
- Progress reporting, measurements and assessments for emissions and other climate progress indicators.
- Research and education for the library field.
- Association work, committee work.
- Incorporating climate action and education into student librarian positions.
- It seemed common for libraries to be included under academic institution's plans but not enacting their own library strategy directly.

Seeds of collaboration beginning elsewhere in BC libraries:

- Beginnings of emergency information sharing, through event boards and social media, such as fire safety, water conservation, evacuation alerts and orders.
- Those involved in climate action throughout BC libraries began to develop strong ties and collaborate.

Intentional climate-strategy was broadly dormant, ad hoc, or piecemeal:

- Local actions instead of system-wide.
- Reactionary instead of proactive.
- Environmental concerns not included in strategic plans, except for service continuity plans.
- Boards not yet pushing libraries toward sustainability strategy.
- As Province and municipalities include climate work in their strategic plans, libraries expect to see trickle-down participation.

Summary and conclusion

0.0 Climate impacts

Early findings indicate that a significant portion of provincial libraries are already experiencing both direct and indirect climate impacts, most commonly resulting in service disruptions and modest but meaningful operational costs. While some consequences remain hidden or unquantified, the data suggests that climate-related pressures - financial, infrastructural, and human - are growing and will likely intensify without substantial societal action.

1.0 Advocacy

A substantial share of libraries are advocating for stronger climate action, though efforts remain largely confined to internal boards rather than within broader policy arenas. Limited documentation of libraries' resilience roles and post-disaster support continues to constrain effective advocacy, even as the sector is increasingly expected to shoulder expanded community responsibilities.

2.0 Climate justice

Engagement with climate justice across the provincial library sector remains uneven. There are a handful of strong collaborations with Indigenous governments and marginalized community groups that stand out against a broader backdrop of limited involvement. While many libraries are building internal capacity and relationships, the overall gaps highlight a significant opportunity to strengthen partnerships that bolster long-term social cohesion and community resilience in the face of escalating climate risks by supporting the people most likely to be impacted first.

3.0 Institutional leadership

More than half of respondents reported strong internal support for climate engagement in their organizations, and many libraries are beginning to collaborate with cultural, scientific, and educational partners to broaden their impact. Yet significant opportunities remain to deepen cross-sector relationships - particularly with other GLAM institutions, media, and faith-based groups - to expand community reach and strengthen collective climate mobilization within the cultural sector.

4.0 Planning and policy

While many libraries have begun integrating climate-related language into their strategic plans - and participants reported that most of those organizations exhibited subsequent changes - significant gaps remain in emergency planning, sustainable procurement, and documenting community resilience work. These omissions suggest substantial room for growth, particularly in leveraging strategic planning as a low-cost, high-impact tool for strengthening organizational readiness and influence.

5.0 Staff capacity and education

Most respondents indicated their organizations had not substantially increased staff capacity for climate action, though some progress is emerging through internal sustainability groups and supports for ecological anxiety. With only a small number of dedicated climate roles or training pathways in place, expanding professional development - both within organizations and through LIS programs - represents a critical opportunity to strengthen the sector's long-term resilience.

6.0 Collaboration with government, decision makers, authorities

Although many funding municipalities and parent organizations have climate action strategies, libraries are rarely named within them and collaboration with government agencies - especially First Nations and higher levels of government - remains limited. Persistent funding constraints and uneven leadership continue to hinder climate mitigation and adaptation efforts, underscoring the need for more coordinated advocacy and stronger relationships with local governments and communities.

7.0 Collaboration in community

Only a quarter of respondents reported hosting climate-focused community programming, and collaborations with local organizations - especially non-traditional collections, climate justice groups, and business associations - remain relatively rare. Yet climate action demands a whole-of-society response, presenting a strong opportunity for libraries to deepen partnerships with Indigenous governments, cultural heritage organizations, and municipal agencies, and community groups in order to strengthen the relationships that can sustain communities through increasingly challenging times.

8.0 Community resilience

Libraries most often adapted to climate impacts through operational or mechanical changes, though costs varied widely and were frequently unknown, with financial and time constraints remaining the primary barriers. At the same time, the widespread development of non-traditional shared collections points to a promising and underrecognized avenue for reducing community consumption and supporting climate resilience, even as many organizations continue to struggle with limited resources and uneven strategic direction.

9.0 Climate information

Climate-related programming and collections emerged as a relative strength, with many libraries offering events, resources, and communications on climate issues, though a notable portion still report inconsistent or inadequate collections. As the sector continues to expand this work, developing more creative, accessible, and participatory approaches to sharing climate knowledge will be essential for meeting the scale and urgency of community information needs.

10. Sustainable services and operations

Only a small fraction of libraries have assessed their own emissions, yet many have still implemented mitigative changes across buildings, infrastructure, and operations, even facing persistent barriers such as limited finances, time, and strategic direction. Opportunities remain to strengthen sector-wide mitigation efforts - particularly through emissions assessments, sustainable disposal pathways for collection materials, and coordinated strategies to reduce fleet and staff-related travel impacts

Prior years

Compared with the more routine but steadily growing climate impacts reported for 2022–2023, the 2021-and-prior experiences reflect a period defined by acute, high-severity events - heat domes, atmospheric rivers, wildfires, and the compounding pressures of COVID-19 - that forced libraries into reactive, crisis-driven responses. Earlier efforts were largely ad hoc, localized, and under-resourced, with limited strategic planning, minimal climate programming, and only scattered examples of advocacy, collaboration, or emissions-related work. In contrast, the recent data shows the beginnings of more intentional sector-wide action: emerging strategic language, growing internal working groups, stronger community-facing roles, and early steps toward coordinated adaptation and mitigation, even as many of the structural challenges from before 2021 persist.

Conclusion

Taken together, these findings illustrate a provincial library sector that is already feeling the effects of a changing climate while simultaneously stepping into an expanded role as public adaptation infrastructure. Libraries are making meaningful progress - beginning new collaborations, experimenting with new forms of programming, and adapting operations and services - but this work remains uneven and often constrained by limited resources, inconsistent strategic direction, and gaps in documentation. At the same time, while much of the focus in climate action has been on technical infrastructure, there is a growing recognition of the importance of social infrastructure. And here, the sector's unique strengths are coming into focus: its deep community roots, its potential for convening dialogues among diverse voices, and its ability to share trustworthy knowledge in ways that build social cohesion and resilience.

Facing outward, it may be that one of the most useful next steps each of our organizations can take would be to conduct relevant resource mapping in our communities, activating our capacity for outreach and identifying potential collaborators, skills, and resources.

Turning inward, holding frank and open conversations with all levels of staff about sustainable organizational strategies and options in each department serves as a good first step in coordinating an overall organizational response.

“All hands on deck”, as they say.

As climate impacts intensify, the need for coordinated action, sustained advocacy, and intentional investment will only grow. Strengthening strategic planning, expanding staff capacity,

documenting climate-related work, and deepening partnerships with Indigenous governments, municipal agencies, and community organizations will be essential steps in ensuring libraries can continue to meet changing community needs. By working collectively and proactively, BC libraries can help shape a more resilient future - one in which communities are better supported, better informed, and better prepared for the challenges ahead.

Looking forward, the next round of data collection - covering 2024 and 2025 - will offer our first true opportunity for benchmarking. As we prepare to host the upcoming 2026 survey (see survey information on the BCLA website), we anticipate gaining a clearer picture of how climate impacts, organizational responses, and sector-wide capacities are evolving over time. This longitudinal perspective will be invaluable in guiding future action and ensuring that libraries remain responsive, adaptive, and well-resourced in a rapidly changing world.

A final note from the BCLA CAC Benchmarking Working Group. While we have offered our thoughts in this analysis, we have also attempted (with arguable success) to refrain from making strong recommendations or further actioning this data. This is intentional. The information gathered for this and future surveys is *yours*. The library's service model is to offer up information and then leave it up to our community to decide what to do with it. And, as members of the province's library community, we are eager to participate in, even convene, collective conversations about what to do next. Ultimately, however, deciding on the appropriate course of action is in the hands of those within your workplace who take this information and apply it in their own day-to-day work or use it to inform a locally appropriate vision of climate action in their own library. We hope that you'll be one of them.

APPENDIX A: Method

Prepared survey content

We began by reviewing the Ontario Library Association's (OLA) Climate Benchmarking Survey questions, and incorporated OLA learnings and recommendations. We then mapped the OLA questions/topics to BCLA's climate position statement. We further brainstormed, crafted and narrowed questions to account for position statement gaps, careful to focus on the value of a measure and its trends over time.

Published and promoted survey

We published the 2024 BC Libraries Climate Benchmarking Survey on June 10, 2024. With BCLA office support, we promoted the survey through BCLA's Branches forum, and direct email sharing to various groups and contacts. We also hosted an information session, and recorded and publicized the recording.

We sent reminder communications as well, and heard from library contacts that due to summer holidays, they needed more time to complete the survey. We planned to close on August 6, 2024 but extended, closing on August 17 2024. The survey was open for a total of 67 days.

Processed data

We received 107 responses total. We summarized and analyzed the data relative to the BCLA climate position statement.

Limitations

This survey was developed, conducted, and analyzed entirely through volunteer labour outside of formal work hours. These constraints scoped the level and detail of design and analysis that was possible, as well as prevented a thorough validation of the data.

Additionally, the community surveyed was not a randomized sample and participants were self-selected.

Finally, due to language used in the introduction to the survey, specifically:

"All questions are optional and all data is valuable. Some questions may not be relevant to your organization - simply leave these blank. If you don't know an answer and find it inconvenient, impractical, or onerous to find the necessary information, reporting 'Don't Know' is useful data for benchmarking. Conversely, if a particular question sparks something for you, we welcome additional context and detail.

Any knowledge you share will create a richer, more detailed picture of our sector in relation to ongoing climate change, but there is no need to expend unreasonable energy or time to research any answers."

the benchmarking team elected to use all the responses received so the final results may be influenced by participants that began the survey, but did not complete it.